Contemporary Indian English Novel

Brahma Dutta Sharma
Susheel Kumar Sharma

ANAMIKA PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS (P) LTD
4697/3, 21-A, Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi 110 002
Phone: 3281655

823.914
SH/CO

First published1999
© 1999, Editors
ISBN 81-86565-60-4

56975

Published by Anamika Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd., 4697/3, 21-A, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. Typeset by Vaz Brothers & Company, Delhi and Printed at Tarun Offset Printers, Delhi 110 053.

Preface

One who intends to know the reality of life in India cannot afford to ignore the novels being written in Indian English. Who can say he knows India unless he has read *Kanthapura*, *The Crown and the Loincloth*. *The Untouchable*, *Azadi*, *A Bend in the Ganges*, *The Guise*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *Cry, the Peacock?*, *Shadowlines*, *The Great Indian Novel*, *Delhi*, and *The God of Small Things?* No doubt, very good novels have been and are being written in Indian languages, the novels written by Indians in English have their distinct place in the literature of our country. Since the writers of these novels have their intellectual links also with the West and desire their novels to be read abroad too, these novels have a characteristic all globe flavour which sometimes makes these novels even unpalatable to Indians. And since most readers abroad try to understand India through them, it becomes essential for Indians too to read them and to write about them. Hence the need of the book for have in your hand.

This book is a modest attempt to say a few new things about the novels written by Indians in English. In each of the articles included in it there is an attempt to go to the heart of the novel

under study and to highlight the views embodied in it. Each of these articles is written to enable the readers to grasp the reality that lies behind the fiction. If they bring to light that reality they will be serving the purpose they have been written for.

Some critics may disagree with us or may have reservations when they agree with us, as literary critics the world over tend to disagree. The voices of dissent are welcome provided they are honest. Critical writings, the fact of the matter is, flourish on disagreements. It is the voice of honest dissent that brings new ideas into existence, and causes the betterment of life. We hope our readers will find our views thought-provoking.

Suggestions for improvement are welcome.

1/2 University Professors' Flats,
Talla Sleepy Hollow
Nainital - 263 002

Brahma Dutta
Susheel Kumar

Contents

Preface v

1. Gandhism in the Crucible: Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* 1
2. Mothers/Mother-Figures in Raja Rao's Fiction 16
3. India in R.K. Narayan's Novel: *The Financial Expert* 25
4. The Gandhian Resistance in the Crucible in *Shadow from Ladakh* 32
5. Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*: A Plea for Syntagmatic Relationship 41
6. Communal Riots in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* 49
7. Search for Alternatives in Margaret Atwood and Anita Desai 62
8. Feminism in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels 68
9. The Contribution of Women to the Development of the Indian English Novel 74
10. Post-Independence Political Issues in Indian English Novel 82

11. Philosophical Reverberations in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* 88
12. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*: A Psychograph of An Alienated Hero 99
13. Arun Joshi's *The City and the River* 112
14. The Occult in Arun Joshi's Novel: *The Last Labyrinth* 128
15. Evil in Shashi Deshpande's Novel : *Come Up and Be Dead* 135
16. Anurag Mathur's Scrutiny of the Inscrutables 144
17. Communism in the Eyes of Arundhati Roy 154

Index 162

1

Gandhism in the Crucible: Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, gives us a glimpse of the Indian struggle for independence in a rural part of India. In this novel, Rao narrates how the inhabitants of a south Indian village fight the British under the leadership of Moorthy, a local Gandhian leader.[1] One can also read the novel to study the form Gandhism takes in action, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and whether this is the best course of action available to the victims of injustice and operation.

Raja Rao has confined the time of the action in the novel to a brief period around Gandhi's Dandi March ending with Gandhi's truce with the then British Viceroy of India. In the beginning of the novel the Dandi March has been reported by Moorthy to his followers in the words, "...they go with the Mahatma to the Dandi beach to manufacture salt,"[2] and the truce has been reported by the narrator towards the end of the novel. (p. 256) Rao confines himself to this brief period instead of describing the entire course of Indian struggle for Independence through Gandhian Struggle, because Rao depicts Gandhism to be an inadequate weapon in the hands of the oppressed to

fight the oppressor. Rather it has been shown to be a form of struggle that makes the fighter absolutely helpless and defenceless with the result that the oppressor has a free hand to subject him to any torture. In this novel Moorthy's Gandhian mode of fighting leaves his followers unprotected[3] in face of their adversaries' assaults. Here is an account of one such 'fight' between the Gandhian fighters and the British police: "... old men, beat us as much as you like, and the policemen beat them till they were flat on the floor, mud in their mouths and mist in their eyes, and as the dawn was rising over the Kenchamma Hill, faces could be seen, and men became silent.... And the policemen twisted their arms and beat them on their knuckles, and spat into their mouths,..." (p. 122) Obviously, it is difficult to hold brief for a philosophy which makes its followers undergo such a humiliating experience.

This is not the only humiliating experience that Raja Rao gives an account of: there are a host of them more. For instance, Moorthy himself undergoes such experience: "...as Moorthy forces himself up, Bade Khan swings round and bang—his lathi has hit Moorthy and his hands are on Moorthy's tuft,..." (p. 85). Gandhi's women followers undergo the humiliating experience of being beaten, being spat on, being trampled on, getting gutter water forced into their mouths and being raped. The following accounts given by a woman bring the facts to light:

> With the rain came the shower of lathi blows, with the rain splashing on our hair came the bang-bang of the lathis, and we began to cry and to scream, and the policemen began to beat the coolies forward,...and the police go to the toddy booth and come out with pots and pots in their hands, and they dip the pots in the side gutters and potfuls and potfuls of water are thrown at us, and they open our mouths and they pour it in and they lift up our saris and throw it at unnameable places,... and with more beating and more beating and more beating we fall back one by one against the earth, . . . (pp. 197-200)

and

> And then their is a loud cry, 'Ayoo-Ayoo', and it's Puttamma's

> and we rush towards her creeping and crawling beneath the lantane bushes, and then when we are on the path again, we see a policeman upon her, and we feel our limbs earth-like and we want to pull him up, and Puttamma is all black in her cheek and her mouth gagged,... (p. 213)

It is unmanly not only to subject but also to see womenfolk being subjected to such abject humiliation and atrocities. What is generally considered to be manly is protecting womenfolk with all one's might and not letting them even be bruised. In Indian history we have the glaring example of Shivaji (the ruler of Maharashtra in the days of Aurangzeb) who saw to it that even his enemy's daughter-in-law reached her husband's home safe. So on reading the accounts given above from the text, one naturally likes to ask whether it is wise for Moorthy to send women volunteers to 'fight' the police, and whether it is wise for these women, acting in accordance with the Gandhian principles, remain Gandhians even in situations when their honour is at stake.

Getting beaten is not the only atrocity the Gandhian fighters undergo in *Kanthapura*: they even lose their lives[4] for no gain. Chandrayya is one of the persons who loses his life as this is what the narrator suggests when she says: "...they gave him a pair of fetters again and a solitary cell, and we never saw him again." (p. 205) No doubt, it is a proof of the bravery of these people that they go on 'fighting' in spite of all atrocities and do not surrender but one would like to know whether it is wise to expose oneself to humiliation and death for no gain.

No doubt, a victim of atrocities is often able to win some people's sympathies and some of the sympathizers sometimes also come to the help of the victim. But to expose oneself to the oppressor's atrocities with the hope that sympathizers will come to one's help is just like leaping into the air. Such an act involves the violation of the principle of self-reliance, and indicates one's becoming unjust at least to oneself. Since no adversary, when challenged, is going to remain passive, one should either not expose oneself to an avoidable danger or defend oneself with all one's might. But Moorthy, the Gandhian, does not permit his followers even to raise their fingers in protest. That is why though the spirit behind Moorthy's 'fighting' even when he has

no means,[5] nay not even the permission to defend himself, is admirable, yet the wisdom behind it deserves to be doubted.

In most cases it is the fear of retaliation that restrains one from assaulting another and if one is sure that there will be no retaliation, one becomes fearlessly ruthless. This is so with Bade Khan, the policeman in *Kanthapura*. Range Gowda's fear "... when Bade Khan sees us, he will fall on us,' (p. 155) is a proof of the fact that one single policeman is able to terrorize the whole village because he fears no retaliation from the followers of Gandhi. No doubt, physical fight is not the best way to fight and that intellectual fight is certainly better, but it is also one's duty to protect one's self besides worrying for one's soul as without a body a soul can do nothing. And the Gandhian Moorthy does not suggest to his followers as to what intellectual or spiritual measures they are expected to take in order to protect themselves from harm at their adversaries hand. Moreover, Moorthy's fight is not purely spiritual or intellectual but at times physical also. For example, he tries to force his entry into the premises of the Skeffington Tea Estate.

Moorthy, like Gandhi, does not make any distinction between offensive violence and defensive violence. However, a distinction between the two does exist. For example, in the novel if Puttamma had killed the policeman who had raped her or as soon as she had realized he intended to do that her action would have been heroic. Or if Seetharam had killed the Coffee Estate owner asking him to 'sell' him his daughter before the owner had murdered him, he would have done something laudable. But the violence of the Coffee Estate owner in order to force people to surrender their wives and daughters to him is the violence that deserves not only condemnation but also severe punishment.

No doubt, Moorthy is right when he tells Range Gowda "...had you reasoned it out with Puttayya, may be you would have come to an agreement, and your canal water would go to your fields, and his canal water to his fields." (p. 99) But on his own part Moorthy does not reason the issue out with the British. Instead, he tries to force his entrance into the Skeffington Coffee Estate physically, makes women picket toddy shops and makes the farmers refuse to pay taxes. When the defiance is that serious, measures to defend oneself too have to be taken. But, on this count Moorthy remains passive. As a consequence the agitators

in *Kanthapura* lose their lands and have to go for shelter elsewhere. This is evident from the narrator's report: "There was only Range Gowda that ever went back to Kanthapura...the corner-house was all but fallen, except for the byre, and Rangamma's house was tileless over verandah, and Nanjamma's house doorless and roofless and the hearth stones in every corner. 'All said in a knot' he concluded, 'there's neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay have built houses on the Bebbur Mound',..." (pp. 258-59) The reporting signifies that the agitation led by Moorthy in accordance with the principles and tactics of Gandhi, has not only failed to deliver the goods but also has caused the agitators a lot of loss. Raja Rao also shows that several persons had their doubts about the efficacy of the Gandhian way: Range Gowda had told Moorthy. "Learned master, at this rate I should have to go and bow down to every pariah and butcher and,. . .let my son-in-law go fooling with concubine Siddi's daughter Mohini who's just come of age. No, learned master, that is not just." (p. 100): and Sadhu Narain had told Moorthy: "...this is not just. Defend one must against evil; if not where is renouncement, continence, austerity, and the control of breath." (p. 124) Nay, there has been narrated an incident that makes it evident that even Moorthy's followers lose in the Gandhian way of fighting. It has been narrated in the following words: "Since the arrest of Moorthy they are afraid. They say, 'We are not all going to sit behind the cage-bars like kraaled elephants', and when I say, 'What does that matter, we are for the Mahatma', they say, 'Yes, yes, learned sir, but our lands will go uncultivated, and there will be neither child nor woman to pull the weeds or direct the canal water'." (p. 154)

Raja Rao makes even Moorthy realize that the movement under his leadership on the Gandhian lines has failed. The fact comes to light when one reads Moorthy's letter in which he writes to Ratna: "Since I am out of prison, I met this Satyagrahi and that and we discussed many a problem, and they all say the Mahatma is a noble person, a saint, but the English will know how to cheat him, and he will let himself be cheated." (p. 257) Since he and other Gandhians know it for certain that the English men will know how to cheat Gandhi, and Gandhi will let himself be cheated, it is obvious that in their opinion there is no question of Gandhi's attaining a success.

This points to Raja Rao's belief that Moorthy's agitation on the Gandhian lines has ended in nothing but people's losing even their land of Kanthapura signifying not only a financial loss but also the loss of bread and shelter. The same meaning lies embodied in the narrator's words: "...the Mahatma has made a truce with the Viceroy and the peasants will pay back the revenues, the youngmen will not boycott the toddy shops, and everything, they say, will be as before. No sister, no nothing can ever be the same again. You will say we have lost this, you will say we have lost that." (p. 256) The truce that has been made is complete surrender as all that the government wanted is accepted by Gandhi and not even a single demand of Gandhi has been accepted, and the narrator in the passage quoted above is rightly stressing the fact of people's losses.

The fact becomes clearer when we compare the condition of Kanthapura before the insurgence and its condition after the insurgence. The inhabitants of Kanthapura grow cardamom, rice, coffee and the land is fruitful. The narrator's observation: "Cart after cart groans through the roads of Kanthapura, and on many a night, before the eyes are shut, the last lights we see are those of the train of carts, and the last voice we hear is that of the cartman who sings through the hollows of the night" (p. 1) signifies that it is a land of plenty and even though people have no political rights, they work hard to have enough to make both ends meet. The same impression is given by the fact that their goddess Kenchamma is bounteous and benign enough to bring rain when the crops need it and cures most of the diseased. (pp. 2-4) But after the insurgence there is desolateness everywhere as Range Gowda, as has been pointed out earlier reports: "...there's neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura...." (p. 259) If Moorthy had the correct idea of the repressive measures the government was going to adopt, he would not have started the insurgence in the way he does. Even C.D. Narasimhaiah who is all praise for Gandhi and Moorthy writes, "It was Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds of little-Gandhis throughout the country. And corner-house Moorthy, *our Moorthy*, as the villagers called him, was one of them. He was in college when he felt the impact of Gandhi, and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man" (p. x) has to acknowledge: "But is there any fulfilment at all in the novel? Thanks to police atrocities the entire village is

desolate...." (p. xv) Even the narrator says: "Mad we were, daughters, mad to follow Moorthy!" (p. 230)

One may say that there are two gains of the insurgence: there starts a sympathy wave in favour of Moorthy and his followers and some coolies working in the Skeffington Coffee Estate leave the Estate and come to live with the villagers, and that several toddy shops are closed as a result of picketting. No doubt both the claims are correct, because the narrator reports the coming of coolies to Kanthapura in the following words: "The next morning we woke up to find that the pariah street was filled with new huts and new fires and new faces and we knew that over three and thirty or more of the coolies of the Godavery had come to live with us" (p. 201) and the closure of the toddy shops in the following words: "...and Madayya said, 'Why, I am but a servant of the toddy contractor, and why should I see the Police beat our women and men?', and he joined us, and the Blue Paper said there were four and twenty shops closed in Kanthapura hobli and we said, 'that is a great thing'." (p. 206) Gains they definitely are but so far as the first gain is concerned it ends in nothing when the policemen force the coolies to go back to the Estate (p. 210), the today shops are closed chiefly because people have been persuaded into refraining from drinking and "there's no sale". (p. 206) Moreover, the question is whether these gains outweigh the loss, as they have been achieved after God knows how many Puttammas have been deprived of their chastity by the British ruler's policemen.

If one analyses the insurgence and tries to analyse the reasons of its failure, one finds that it fails chiefly because the sheet anchor of the leader is of the hope that his adversaries hearts will change. The fact that Moorthy and his followers want the British ruler's hearts to change comes to light in the statements like the following one: "Monsters, monsters, yes, they may be, but we are out to convert them, the Mahatma says we should convert them, and we shall convert them. Our will and our love will convert them." (p. 229) No doubt, one may cite the example of Gautama Buddha who succeeded in converting Angulimal into a votary of non-violence, but that does not mean that anybody can convert a monster into a human being simply by exposing oneself to the monster's assaults. The British police, as shown by Raja Rao, are too monstrous and devilish to feel any

picks of conscience in subjecting women to humiliations. The foundation of Moorthy's hope is the belief that gods reward one for one's virtues, as he tells Range Gowda: "Every enemy you create is like pulling out a lantana bush in your backyard. The more you pull out, the wider you spread the seeds, the thicker becomes the lantana growth. But every friend you create is like a jasmine hedge. You plant it, and it is there and bears flowers and you offer them to the gods, and the gods give them back to you...." (p. 99) But it is treacherous to advise the coolies of the Coffee Estate to befriend the second British owner who is making their wives and daughters victims of his lust. And it is cowardice to ask these coolies not to do anything against such a man for the reason that in doing so they will be creating an enemy.

The chief qualification of a king or a political leader is that he is able to conquer his enemies and is not conquered by them as it has said in the *Atharvaveda* that, "The crown be given to one who can bring prosperity, who can conquer his enemies, whom enemies cannot conquer, one who commands a dominating position among kings, who deserves to be the head of the assembly, whose traits, actions and temperament are praiseworthy, who commands respect, who deserves to be approached even for shelter and before whom people bow down."[6] It is on this ground that Moorthy, the Gandhian leader in the novel, fails to be qualified enough to be a political leader.

The anti-British movement in Kanthapura has been crushed for three more reasons: *first*, the agitators have only the doctrine of non-violence to defend themselves with, with the result that they are unable to face police repression; *secondly*, the police have no sympathy with them and try to suppress the movement with a heavy hand; and *thirdly*, all Indians are not united. The fact that the agitators have no physical means to defend themselves with is quite obvious as they are non-violent in accordance with the teachings of Gandhi. The fact that the government resorts to repressive measures and tries to suppress the movement with a heavy hand, is evidenced by the way the policemen mercilessly beat even women, spit in people's mouths and even rape women. The descriptions of such occurrences are interspersed in the whole novel. Here is one of them as an illustration: "He said he had the great fever three days after he had been in prison, and they ordered him to get out as usual and grind the oil-seed,

and though he said he was too weak, the warders cried, 'Ass! Pig! Badmash!' and beat him with their canes and drove him to the yoke; and there they put him to a mill and, whip in hand, they cried, 'Hoy-hoy' as though he were a bull, and made him run round and round the oil-mill until he had ground three maunds of peanut oil. Then suddenly he could run no more and gasping he fell on the floor and nothing but blood came out of his mouth, blood and nothing but blood. . . ." (p. 205) And the fact that all Indians are not united is evident from the fact that the policemen who beat the agitators are all Indians and when the government snatches the land from the villagers and the people who come from Bombay to take it on the conditions laid down by the government, are also Indians. (p. 259) No doubt, Gandhi would not have been able to do anything to remove the second factor, and he did do something to remove the third factor, but he should have done much to remove the first weakness and should have said that it was not only one's right but also one's duty to defend oneself.

The Gandhian path of non-violent resistance gives Gandhi's followers no way, nay not even a right, to protect themselves, as this path expects them to remain non-violent "in thought, word and deed" and not to raise even a finger in protest even when they are beaten or trampled upon or even killed.[7] One may be curious to know as to why Gandhi took this stand. Perhaps Gandhi expected truth-force to help the satyagrahis, as he wrote: "Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force."[8] In other words, "Primarily [Satyagraha] is a case of appealing to the reason and conscience of the opponent by inviting suffering on oneself. The motive is to convert the opponent and make him one's willing ally and friend. It is based on the idea that the moral appeal to the heart and conscience is, in the case of human beings, more effective than an appeal based on threat of bodily pain or violence."[9] Similar are the views of Moorthy, the Gandhian protagonist of Kanthapura, as he says: "I shall love even my enemies. The Mahatma says we should love even our enemies. . . " (p. 89) and argues, ". . . if Truth needs a defence, God Himself would need one, for as the Mahatma says, Truth is God, and I want no soul to come between me and truth" (p. 124), and even his followers regard him as their Mahatma (p. 106).

Two more answers have been given: one, that non-violence was Gandhi's creed and that it would have been a violation of his own creed if he had permitted his followers to resort to violence; and, second, that he had his faith in the British administration of Justice. The first view has been explained by Romain Rolland in the following words: "As the Satyagrahis are not allowed to use violence in advancing their cause... they must rely solely on the love-force that radiated from their faith and on their willingness to accept suffering and sacrifice joyously, freely. The hardest fibre must melt in the fire of love. If it does not melt it is because it is not strong enough (March 9, 1920). Those joining the Satyagraha movement had to promise to disobey the laws declared by the Satyagraha Committee to be unjust, to follow in the path of truth, and to abstain from all violence against the lives, persons or property of their adversaries."[10] Gandhi wrote: "I should also remind correspondents that the word Satyagraha is often most loosely used and is made to cover veiled violence. But as the author of the word, I may be allowed to say that it excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled, and whether in thought, word or deed. It is break of Satyagraha to wish ill to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him or of him with the intention of harming him."[11] However, these views of Gandhi are not the absolute truth about him. For Gandhi at several other places not only advocated violence but actually participated in it. Gandhi advocates violence in his statements like: "I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence."[12] and "...I would... certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan, if he waged war against the British Government."[13] He actually participated in violence when he offered his services at the time of the Zulu Revolt.[14] Boer war had raised recruits in India during the First World War.[15] Commenting on Gandhi's partcipation in First World War Fritz Kraus writes: "... Gandhi came hazardously close to the doctrine of sword."[16] And the second view has been advanced by Prakash Sarangi in the following words: "... Gandhi had a great deal of respect for the British administration of justice. This is evident from several instances when he pleaded guilty in the courts of law after violating laws made by the British empire."[17] However, in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* the British administrators of justice have been shown to be unjust in their ways. Here when the

British owner of the Coffee Estate kills a Brahmin clerk for not agreeing to let his daughter become a victim of the British Estate owner's lust, the court not only gives him no punishment but forgives him (p. 81) with the result that the British Estate owner continues making the wives and daughters of the non-Brahmin coolies victims of his lust. (pp. 80-81) Raja Rao articulates people's distrust in the British administration of justice also in the following piece of conversation between Ranganna and Moorthy, "... Ranganna said, 'Judges are not for Truth, but for Law, and the English are not for the brown skin but for the white, and the Government is not with the people but with the police.' And Moorthy listened to all this and said, 'If that is so, it will have to change'." (p. 123) So if Gandhi had faith in the British administration of justice, he was, as Raja Rao's version makes evident, mistaking a piece of land full of hot sand to be a pool of water.

Raja Rao seems to believe that Gandhi's faith in God and his not letting evil flourish, led him not to do anything to protect himself and his followers. The fact comes to light when we read the following speech of Moorthy: "... let there be peace and love and order. As long as there is a God in Heaven and purity in our hearts, evil cannot touch us. We hide nothing. We hurt none." (p. 120) Moorthy lays two conditions for one to remain unharmed by evil: there should be God in Heaven, and there should be purity in the man's heart. So far as the first condition is concerned, man can do nothing about it as if God is there in Heaven, there is nothing for a man to do, and if He is not there, a man cannot make Him be there. However, even if it is taken for granted that He is very much there, the second condition gives rise to a problem: there is no objective way to find out whether or not there is purity in one's heart. But one thing is certain: many of the persons who were killed are believed to have been pure at heart. They include Jesus, Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King in the West, and Lord Krishna, Maharshi Dayanand and Mahatma Gandhi in the East. However, according to Lord Krishna one is free in the domain of action, but the consequences of one's actions one cannot avoid reaping, as he says: *karamanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana/ ma karmaphal heturbhurma te sangostva karmani* (*The Gita* II, 47) (To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits: let not the fruits of action be thy motive: neither let there be

in thee any attachment to inaction.)[18]

If this is so it is not unlikely that a man who is pure at heart becomes a victim of violence at the hands of one indulging in misdeeds. That is the reason why it becomes essential for one, even if this one is pure at heart—to defend oneself.

Gandhi's thrust is on having faith in the enemy. Moorthy quotes him, "Have faith in your enemy, he says, have faith in him and convert him." (p. 257) If one has faith in the enemy there is no need for one to resist. Secondly, the question as to how to protect oneself from the enemy before he has been converted into a friend remains unanswered. Moreover, Raja Rao's Gandhi makes no distinction between gentle enemies and the devilish enemies and wants all of them to be loved. If this logic is adhered to, Puttamma is expected to love even the policeman who has violated her. But it would be stupid to expect her to do so. Gandhi seems to be a non-dualist looking for divinity in every human being. But all human beings are not alike and some of them are so vicious that only mad people can talk of loving them. Lord Krishna does make a distinction between the persons on the right path and those given to vices when he says: "I incarnate myself from time to time to protect the righteous, to crush the vicious and to re-establish righteousness."[19]

The Gandhian approach would have stood vindicated only if the members of the ruling British community had come to side with Moorthy in his fight. The coolies' coming to Kanthapura or the shopkeepers' closing their toddy shops is no justification of the theory that non-violent resistance enables one to win the opponent's heart. In the novel it is Gandhi who has to accept all the conditions of the white rulers and make a truce with the Viceroy that "...the peasants will pay back the revenues, the young man will not boycott the toddy shops, and everything... will be as before." (p. 256) If everything has to be as before, Puttamma has lost her chastity for nothing.

The struggle which keeps the women strugglers like Puttamma hand-tied even when they are being violated cannot be regarded as the right form of struggle because even if such a struggle bears the desired fruit—though it is very unlikely—the price that has been paid for it is too high for any compensation. No doubt, there may be persons for whom this price is not very heavy but the arguments of such people can give no

consolation at all to a woman like Puttamma who has been subjected to humiliation of the kind and believes "I have sinned" (p. 223) and breaks into sobs.

Another question that crops up is whether one can convert one's enemies into one's friends by letting them beat, spit at, and rape one. And the answer is "Certainly not". One beats, spits at and rapes a person whom one believes to be much inferior to one, and one develops friendly relations with one whom one regards as one's equal. That is why the concept of the conversion of an enemy into a friend is based on a figment of imagination. By letting one's enemy make one weak one is going to gain nothing but contempt. One can get rid of an enemy only by rising against him with all one's might—physical, intellectual and spiritual. Raja Rao's Bade Khan can never have friendly relations with Moorthy and his followers; for him everyone of them is beneath contempt, just as for Winston Churchill, Gandhi was when he called the latter 'a half naked faqir'.

All this makes it evident that *Kanthapura* is an embodiment of Raja Rao's recoil from Gandhism. But there arises another question, namely, 'which political philosophy does Raja Rao posit his belief in?' The answer to this question is there in Moorthy's letter to Ratna, where Moorthy writes: "Ratna things must change. The youths here say they will change it. Jawaharlal will change it... he says in swaraj there shall be neither the rich nor the poor. And he calls himself an 'equal-distributionist', and I am with him and his men." (pp. 256-58) Raja Rao's making Moorthy posit his faith in the political philosophy standing for equal distribution of wealth signifies his positing his own faith in socialism, as this political philosophy regards equal distribution of wealth as its goal. The fact is reinforced by the following words of his, "... I have come to realize bit by bit, and bit by bit, when I was in prison, that as long as there will be iron gates and barbed wires round the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and city cars that can roll up the Bebbur Mound, and gas-lights and coolie cars, there will always be pariahs and poverty." (p. 257) The words embody the view that the solution of the problem of poverty lies in the abolition of private property, which is again a goal of socialism.

However, in this novel Raja Rao does not go into the details of socialism and does not think over the questions whether it

is just to distribute money equally among all irrespective of their merits and whether it is fair to deprive each and everybody of his private property. Nor does he directly take up the question whether the victims of the colonial rule should try to attain independence through the path adopted by socialists. However, the implication of Moorthy's preferring socialism to Gandhism is that Raja Rao likes the victims of colonial oppression to adopt the path of socialists.

Notes and References

1. Commenting on Gandhi's role in arousing people who in turn became leaders in their own places, Romain Rolland writes: "This is the man who has stirred three hundred million people to revolt, who has shaken the foundations of British Empire...." Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, tr. Catherine D. Groth (Publications Division, Government of India, 1968), p. 2.
2. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1938]), p. 169. All the subsequent quotations from the novel refer to this edition.
3. Gandhi wrote: "[The Satyagrahi] must submit to insults and worse at the hands of bigoted and yet love them, if they will change their hearts." M.K. Gandhi, 'Vyom Satyagraha', *Satyagraha* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1958 [1951]), p. 182.
4. When Gandhi was asked by his son as to what he should have done when his father was 'fatally assaulted in 1908', Gandhi said, '...it was [my son's] duty to defend me even by using violence.' M.K. Gandhi, 'The Doctrine of Sword', *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. 1 (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1948 [1942]), p. 1.
5. For Gandhi passive resistance was always not to be passive. Gandhi wrote: "I rejected the word passive resistance because of its insufficiency and its being interpreted as a weapon of the weak. It was direct action in South Africa which told and told so effectively that it converted General Smuts to sanity." (M.K. Gandhi, 'Neither a Saint Nor a Politician', *Satyagraha, op. cit.*, p. 110). At another place Gandhi wrote about the measures a *Satyagrahi* should adopt before turning to non-violence (See M.K. Gandhi, 'Qualifications for Satyagraha', *Satyagraha, op. cit.*, p. 77).
6. *Indro Jayati na para jayata, adhirajo rajasu raj yatai/charkritya eedyo vandyashchopasadyo namasyo bhaveh (Atharvaveda Ka. 6. Anu. 10, va. 98. man.1).*
7. (a) Gandhi defined Satyagraha as the "Vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but one's own self (M.K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings* [Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1933], p. 501).
   (b) At another place Gandhi calls it 'courage' if one allows oneself to be killed and 'cowardice' if one kills. He writes: "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I advice violence'...I cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing. But to him, who does not have this courage, I advise that of killing and of being killed, rather than that of shamefully fleeing from danger." Gandhi quoted by Rolland, p. 34.
8. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 23 March, 1921.
9. Bharatan Kumarappa, 'Editor's Note', M.K. Gandhi's *Satyagraha, op. cit.*, p. iv.
10. Romain Rolland, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
11. M.K. Gandhi, 'Satyagraha vs Compulsion', *Satyagraha, op. cit.*, pp. 201-02.
12. M.K. Gandhi, 'The Doctrine of the Sword', *Non-Violence: Peace and War*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
13. M.K. Gandhi, 'The Afghan Bogey', *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. 1, p. 6.
14. For those who do not consider Gandhi's raising an ambulance corps a participation in war the following words of Gandhi need attention. "I draw no distinction between those who wield the weapons of destruction and those who do the Red Cross work. Both participate in war and advance its cause." M.K. Gandhi, 'My Attitude Towards War', *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. 1, p. 73.
15. M.K. Gandhi, 'Why did I Assist in the Last War', *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. 1, p. 22.
16. Fritz Kraus, 'India's Great Spirit', *Mahatma Gandhi as Germans See Him*, Heimo Rau (Ed.), (Bombay: Shakuntla, 1976), p. 85.
17. 'Gandhi and Rawls on Civil Disobedience', *Indian Journal of American Studies*, XIX, 1 and 2 (Winter and Summer 1989), p. 74.
18. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagvadgita* (Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1971, (1948), p. 119.
19. *Paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya cha dushkritam/dharmasansthapanarthaya sambhvami yuge yuge (The Gita 4-18).*

2

Mothers/Mother-Figures in Raja Rao's Fiction

Mothers/mother-figures appear in several novels and short-stories of Raja Rao like *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, 'Javni', 'The Cow of the Barricades', and 'Akkayya'. In *Kanthapura* we have Moorthy's real mother Narsamma and a mother-figure Rangamma; in *The Serpent and the Rope* Ramaswamy's step-mother Vishalakshi, in 'Javni' Ramu's mother-like sister Sita, and Javni; in 'The Cow of the Barricades' the cow Gauri, who acts like a mother trying to avert a fight between the white rulers and the Indian community when they are on the point of taking a plunge into the fire of war; and in, 'Akkayya' Akkayya who has looked after children in her sister's family for decades and has acted as their foster-mother.

There is a lot of variety here: if the novelist has created a strong-viewed mother in Narsamma, he has also created a soft-viewed mother in Vishalakshi; if he has created strong upholders of the traditional practices of the orthodox Hindu society like Narsamma and Sita, he has also created a Gandhiite in Gauri; if he describes the ways of independent mothers/mother-figures like Akkayya, Javni, Vishalakshi and Narsamma, he also

describes the ways of Sita, a mother figure leading a happy married life.

All these mothers/mother-figures are affectionate and self-sacrificing, whether it is Narsamma, or Vishalakshi, Sita, or Gauri, Akkayya, or Javni. For instance, though Narsamma scolds Moorthy bitterly for mixing up with the pariahs, she displays a tenderness of heart. On the one hand, she says to him: "Oh! to have a son excommunicated! Oh! to have gone to Benares and Rameshwaram and to Gaya and to Gokurna, and to have a son excommunicated! I wish I had closed my eyes with your father instead of living to see you polluted. Polluted! Go away, you pariah!"[1] but on the other hand, when alone, she gives vent to tears (*K*, p. 59). Vishalakshi Ramaswamy's step-mother, is absolutely different from the proverbial inimical step-mother out to eliminate the step-son. She is affectionate enough not to sever her relations with Ramaswamy and to regard him as the head of the family after the death of her husband. No doubt, in her last days Akkayya becomes senile and ill-treats her sister's children, but before she reaches that stage she is affectionate and tender with the children. Sita, who takes care of her brother Ramu like a mother, loves him so much that even Javni tells him: "Ramappa, your sister loves you as though you were her own child".[2] As a matter of fact, she thinks she is living mainly to take care of him as Javni reports to Ramu: "Your sister loves you, talks of you all the time, and says, 'If my brother did not live, I should have died long ago". (*CB*, p. 7) Like Charles Dickens' Mrs. Joe Gargary, Sita is a mother to her little brother, but one cannot miss the difference between the two characters: Mrs. Joe Gargary regards Pip as a burden on her, beats him frequently and expects him to be grateful to her for her having nursed him; on the other hand, Sita showers her affection on Ram, admires him and is proud of him, as is obvious from her affectionate boast, "He looks a prince, Javni" (*CB*, p. 4). Javni, another mother-figure in the story, showers a mother's affection on her brother's youngest child and though her brother and his wife call her "a witch and an evil spirit" (*CB*, p. 17), she saves for the child all the mangoes and cakes she gets from Sita (*CB*, p. 18).

All these mothers/mother-figures hold strong views and stick to them so fondly that they often sacrifice their dearly

cherished possessions for them. The fact can be illustrated by taking the examples of Narsamma and Gauri; when Narsamma is unable to make her son Moorthy adhere to the practice of regarding pariahs as untouchables and her son has been excommunicated, she chooses to die; likewise, when Gauri the cow finds the master to have failed to stop the people of the town from making preparations to fight the white ruler's army, she climbs up a barricade and gets herself shot dead by the white military commander.

In spite of being affectionate these mothers/mother-figures at one time or the other find their relations with the sons strained. In some cases this is so because these mothers/mother-figures cling to the traditions blindly and do not try to find whether they are justifiable. The fact comes to light when we study the ways of Narsamma and Sita. Moorthy's mother Narsamma wants her son to continue regarding the pariahs as untouchables just as the orthodox people like the Bhatta and the Swami have been doing. And since she fails to make Moorthy obey her—as he has become a follower of Gandhi—the relations of the mother and the son become strained. This implies that she values the traditions of her caste more than her son's principles. Likewise, Sita refuses to change her views about castes and goes on regarding the washermen, and the people belonging to the menial castes as lower than the Brahmins, even when her views have been described as inhuman by her son-like brother Ramu. The passage:

> Javni went straight into the byre where her food was usually kept. I could not bear that. Time and again I had quarrelled with my sister about it. But she would not argue it out. They are of the lower class, and you cannot ask them to sit and eat with you,' she would say.
> 'Of course!' I said, 'After all, why not? Are they not like us, like any of us? Only the other day you said you loved her as if she were your elder sister or mother.'
> 'Yes!' she grunted angrily. 'But affection does not ask you to be irreligious.'
> 'And what, pray, is being irreligious' I continued, furious. 'Irreligious. Irreligious. Well, eating with a woman of a lower caste is irreligious. And Ramu,' she cried desper-

> ately, 'I have enough of quarrelling all the time. In the name of our holy mother can't you leave me alone!' There, tears.
> 'You are inhuman, inhuman!' I spat, disgusted.
> 'Go and show your humanity!' she grumbled and hiding her face beneath the blanket, she wept harder. (*CB*, pp. 9-10)

makes it clear that the gulf between the views of Sita and those of Ramu is unbridgeable as Sita is not willing to budge even a millimeter from the orthodox criterion of high and low castes, while Ramu, a democrat, regards all human beings alike and deems her code of high and low castes inhuman. Since both of them stick to their respective perception and regard it absolutely faultless, there is no possibility of compromise or even a patch-up between the two sets of views.

So far as Gauri is concerned, she is unhappy with the community because she does not approve of people's resorting to violence to achieve their ends and wants them to remain non-violent. When the narrator says: "And the Master's disciples gathered grain and grass and rice-water to give her every Tuesday, but she refused it all and took only the handful of grain the Master gave" (*CB*, p. 174), he suggests that the cow approves of the ways of only the Master who is an upholder of non-violence, and not those of his disciples. Since most people in the town do not hesitate in resorting to the use of violence to achieve their end, as the narrator reports, "...they built more and more barricades and put themselves behind these, and one day they were the masters of the town" (*CB*, p. 177). Gauri is disturbed a great deal; as per the narrator's report : "...she looked very sad and somebody had even seen a tear, clear as a drop of the Ganges, run down her cheeks, for she was of compassion infinite and true" (*CB*, p. 177).

In *Kanthapura* the mother and the son are poles apart in their attitudes towards the British empire in India; while Narsamma wants her son Moorthy to become a cog in this machine of the empire by becoming "a Sub Collector or an Assistant Commissioner" (*K*, p. 50), Moorthy, in order to break the empire and to drive the British rulers out of India by using non-violent means, no doubt, throws "his foreign books into the bonfire and walked out, a Gandhi's man' (*K*, p. 49).

The mother and the son are likewise, poles apart in their

attitude towards the Swami, the head of the Brahmin community. She values the Swami's approval more than anything else, but he cares not even a fig for it, and if she instructs Moorthy, "Go away and don't you ever show your face to me again till you have been purified by the Swami" (*K*, p. 58), Moorthy defies the Swami saying, "Let the Swami do what he likes. I will go and do more and more pariah work. I will go and eat with them if necessary. Why not? Are they not men like us? And the Swami, who is he? A self-chosen fool. He may be learned in the Vedas and all that, but he has no heart. He has no thinking power" (*K.*, p. 59). In wanting her son to be a conformist and forcing him to follow the norms of the community, Narsamma unknowingly becomes a tool in the hands of the tools of the British imperialists in India. She is well meaning no doubt, but she is too simple to understand people's motives behind their actions and utterances.

However, this should not bring one to the conclusion that Narsamma had no hand in Moorthy's becoming a fighter for his country's freedom. Though when we read the account of how Moorthy refuses to budge from his stand on his pariah work in the passage; "From that day on they never spoke to each other, Narsamma and Moorthy. He sat and ate his food by the kitchen threshold and she in the kitchen, and everybody saw that Narsamma was growing thin as a bamboo and shrivelled like banana bark" (*K*, p. 61) and then the account of Narsamma's death on hearing of her son's excommunication (*K*, pp. 61-62), we are likely to gather that impression. The fact remains that it is Narsamma who is largely responsible for his having become the Gandhi of Kanthapura, because it is she who has given him values which make him what he becomes. The fact comes to light when we study the ideas she has instilled in him. One of these is that he shall do nothing that brings dishonour to his family and she is sure of her son following her injunctions and keeping the ideals. When she is told by Venkamma that for the deeds of her son the whole village of Kanthapura "will be excommunicated" (*K*, p. 54), she, with full confidence, denies the charge, "No, not my son. No, Never will my son bring dishonour to his family. Never. Never" (*K*, p. 54). The force in her answer signifies that she is absolutely sure of her son's cherishing honour above every other consideration. On the issue of bringing honour to the family there is no disagreement between

the mother and the son, the disagreement exists only on what brings honour to the family. It is Narsamma who has instilled in him the ethical value of having a faultless moral conduct and has made him assure her: "I swear upon my holy thread I shall keep pure and noble and will bring no evil to my ancestors" (*K*, p. 50). The narrator informs the reader that both the mother and the son value moral conduct highly: Narsamma is "a pious old woman... and her big, broad ash-marks gave her such an air of ascetic holiness" (*K*, pp. 46-47), and Moorthy is "as honest as an elephant:" (*K*, pp. 12-13).

Much else too in Moorthy has come from from his mother. For instance, when he undertakes a fast, he chants the *gayatri mantra* as the narrator reports: "Moorthy said his *gayatri* thrice a thousand and eight times, and when the sanctum lights began to flicker he spread out his upper cloth on the floor or laid himself down" (p. 88). This was the practice of Narsamma too as the narrator tells us: "... she sat herself down to meditate, but the *gayatri* muttered itself out soft and fast,..." (*K*, p. 59), the son must have learnt the *mantra* from Narsamma.

Moorthy is a true son of his mother even though their views on caste-system differ. Moorthy adheres to the philosophy he posits his faith in as faithfully as his mother does. During the days of his struggle Moorthy believes Gandhism to be a faultless kind of philosophy. He quotes Gandhi quite often and carries on his movement against the British in accordance with the policies and programmes of Gandhi. His undertaking a fast, his making his people resist their adversaries non-violently, and his making his women followers picket at wine-shops are all Gandhian steps. In other words, at this stage of his struggle he regards Gandhism as the gospel truth. However, he does not stick to this thinking forever. When he becomes a Nehruvian socialist, he is no more a Gandhiite and Gandhism is no longer the gospel truth for him. This is the way of his mother too: she regards the orthodox Brahmin thinking as the gospel truth and considers even a slight deviation from it as a sin but when she learns of her son's excommunication by the Swami, she finds the fact unbearable and resolves to die.

In other words, the son adheres to a view as loyally as does his mother and neither is capable enough to think independently. Moorthy is able to evaluate Gandhism critically towards the end

of the novel when he realizes that Gandhi is often outwitted by the British, but even his rejection of Gandhism is very mild and he accepts Nehru as his guide chiefly because Nehru has the same regard for Gandhi as Bharata had for Ram. This is evident from his writing to Ratna: "Jawahar Lal is like a Bharat to the Mahatma,..." (*K*, p. 258).

Likewise, Akkayya, when she is old and is suffering from a serious disease, has become senile and uses horribly abusive language for her sister's grand-children and great grand children. Though in her old age she has not remained what she was, she still wants herself to be obeyed and taken care of by small children almost all the twenty-four hours. No doubt, she deserves sympathy but it is unreasonable on her part to expect children to behave like mature persons and look after elderly people like dutiful grown-up sons do. Small children cannot take care of even themselves and have to be taken care of and have to be helped to equip themselves with the knowledge that will enable them to earn their livelihood and discharge other responsibilities of life.

When one looks for a mother playing the role that Jijabai played in making Shivaji a leader of the nationalist forces of India, or the role that Pavel's mother plays in *Mother* in carrying on the work that her son has started, one finds in Raja Rao's fiction two mother-figures, namely, Rangamma, who figures in *Kanthapura*, and Gauri, who figures in 'The Cow of the Barricades'. It is Rangamma who fosters anti-imperialist activities in Kanthapura and extends her protective hand to Moorthy when he needs it. Under Rangamma's protective care Moorthy is able to develop the ideas he has received from Narsamma and Gandhi. Likewise, Gauri who acts as the mother of the whole community averts a fight between the government and the people and consequently saves precious lives even though she has to sacrifice herself for that.

Narsamma has her limitations: she is not politically conscious, is not acquainted with the incidents occurring in the political field, and does not know that her country is in the hands of the British who have no right to own it. But Rangamma is equipped with all that a freedom fighter's mother needs, as the narrator reports: "Our Rangamma is no village kid. It is not for nothing she got papers from the city, *Tai-nadu*, *Vishwakarnataka*,

Deshbhandu and *Jayabharatha*, and she knows so many, many things, too, of the plants that weep, of the monkeys that were the men we have become, of the worms, thin as dust worms that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera" (*K*, p. 41). It is Rangamma who takes care of Moorthy after Narsamma's death, when Moorthy observes fast for three days, Rangamma is worried about his health just as a mother would be. The fact comes to light when we read the passage: "And when the evening meal is over Rangamma comes to find out Seenu, and lantern in hand and with a few bananas in her sari fringe, she goes to the temple, and Moorthy, when he sees the light, smiles and asks what it is all about, Rangamma simply places the bananas before him and stands waiting for a word from him" (*K*, p. 87).

Even step-mothers in Raja Rao's fiction are not bad unlike Rama's mother Kekeyi in Tulsidas' epic *Ramcharitmanas*. Ramaswamy's mother Vishalakshi is large-hearted enough to let Ramaswamy have his own ways in accordance with her late husband's instructions, not to over-burden him with her instructions and demands with the result that he is able to pursue his research work in France. She reminds one of Abraham Lincoln's step-mother who was good enough to make her illiterate step-son literate and to instill in him love for books.

The crucial question in this context is whether the mother in Raja Rao's fiction deserves to be obeyed, as one is enjoined on by the *Taittirriyopanishad* to regard the mother as a goddess (*"maatri devo bhava"*). The fact of the matter is that mothers/mother-figures in Raja Rao's fiction are not faultless or all-knowing. If Moorthy's mother Narsamma had been faultless, she would not have become a stooge of the Swami and Bhatta and would have judged for herself whether it was really undesirable for her son to visit the pariahs to make them join the country's struggle for independence, and to treat them as persons deserving compassion rather than contempt. In other words, the mother/mother figure in Raja Rao's fiction is not always a dependable authoritative presence. In many cases she takes an erroneous stand and employs all the weapons in her arsenal to force the son to obey her. Both Narsamma and old Akkayya are glaring illustrations of the fact. Narsamma takes the unreasonable stand that the pariahs are to be regarded as untouchables

and that the dictates of the head of the community are to be obeyed. Since a man should not be regarded as despicable only because he earns his bread by making shoes or by cleaning latrines, it is obvious that her stand is erroneous and so is the stand of the Swami and Bhatta who excommunicate Moorthy for visiting the pariahs. If Moorthy had regarded his mother as a dependable authority figure and had resolved to obey her, he would have become a follower of the Swami and consequently a stooge of the British rulers of India, rather than a fighter for the independence and the uplift of his country. However, this too is certain that a hero in a fictional work of Raja Rao is able to do what he has because his mother/mother figure has given him not only the ideals he is pursuing but also a protective hand at crucial moments.

Notes and References

1. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1989, 1938), p. 57. All the subsequent quotations from *Kanthapura* (*K* for short) refer to this edition of the novel.
2. Raja Rao, *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 7. All the subsequent quotations from this collection (*CB* for short) refer to this edition of the book.

3

India in R.K. Narayan's Novel *The Financial Expert*

The locale of R.K. Narayan's novel *The Financial Expert*, a town which the novelist calls Malgudi and which, as shown in the novel is situated in the vicinity of Madras, is a place where modern facilities have reached in the form of banks, high schools, printing presses, a tourists' 'home', a club and motor cars, as there is a Land Mortgage Co-operative Bank outside which Margayya works as a banking guide for some time, and there is a government bank close to the private bank which Margayya sets up after he has discontinued his publishing business. In the town there is a High School in which Balu gets education for a few years. There is a printing press which Madan Lal owns and in which Dr. Pal's book *Domestic Harmony* is printed. There is a tourist' home which Dr. Pal sets up and in which Margayya meets him before he starts his bank. There is a club from which Dr. Pal and Balu come in a motor-car and then Margayya beats his son's companion, and there are at least two motor-cars we hear of, the first is the one which brings Pal and Balu from the club and the second in which Margayya rides.

However, there also exist here private money-lenders like

Margayya, jaggery godowns full of flies like the one close to the shop which Margayya hires, and much-stuffed gutters like the one in which Balu throws his father's account-book.It is a town where industrialization has begun as here a number of mills have been opened and the biggest mill-owner is Mangal Seth.[1] But there also exists here a *sari*-manufacturing cottage handloom factory (*TFE*, p. 24) owned by the man in whose house the priest performs *the puja* for the health of a diseased baby. The town is, thus, populated by mill-owners, bank-employees, private bank-owners, teachers, printing press-owners, publishers and writers, and is approached by peasants from villages around it.

The farmers who figure here are mostly in need of money and approach the Land Mortgage Co-operative Bank for loans. By and large they are uneducated as they have no knowledge of the byelaws of the Bank, need Margayya to fill their application forms, and put their thumb-impressions on their application forms rather than sign them (*TFE*, pp. 11-12). The fact that they suffer from inferiority complex is evident from their diffidence in approaching the officals of the bank even though Margayya tries to bring home to them that as share-holders they are the employers and the officials are the employed (*TFE*, p. 12). They need money not for any productive use but for consumptive use, like celebrating the marriage of their daughters. For instance, the farmer Malanna is in need of money for his daughter's marriage (*TFE*, p. 5). Margayya's telling one of the farmers how he can get another loan of three hundred rupees within a week (*TFE*, p. 3) evidences the fact that most of them try to get as much loan as they can. But many of them evade paying loans back and try to find—sometimes successfully—excuses for that. For instance, one of these peasants named Kali tells Margayya that he can give the latter his money only when he shows him the relevant entry in his account book (*TFE*, p. 37). Kali's also saying that he has no money at the moment even though Margayya knows and tells him that he has two hundred and seventy-nine rupees and four annas with him (*TFE*, p. 36) Kali will prefer not paying the loan back. However, this should not be taken to mean that villagers are dishonest and the townsfolk are all honest because Margayya, a townsman, is far from being honest as he pays no money to the optician for the "silver-rimmed glasses" he has bought from him (*TFE*, p. 4). The behaviour of the farmers in this novel, thus,

is a proof of the fact that R.K. Narayan's India of *The Financial Expert* is an India facing the problem of rural poverty and illiteracy. Since there exists no organization of the farmers in this novel, it is evident that the farmers of Narayan's India in *The Financial Expert* have not made any effort to organize themselves into unions. In other words, Narayan's Malgudi has no organization to unite the peasants so that they may jointly fight for better economic gains in the market and for a better treatment from the government officials.

Since the Co-operative Bank supplies loan application forms free of any charge, and does not charge even cost-price, it is evident that the Governors of the Bank want it to work for the welfare of the peasants rather than as a profit-making institution.

Since Mallanna asks for money for his daughter's marriage even though he spends it on alcoholic drinks and gambling (*TFE*, p. 5), it is evident that the marriage of a daughter, even in the rural parts of India, of *The Financial Expert*, is an expensive affair. Margayya's explicit statement: "You know how it is with the dowry system—" (*TFE*, p. 5) evidences that the bride's father is expected to give dowry to the bridegroom in such a large amount that the former feels he is being robbed of what belongs to him.

However, the condition of the urban population is different: the fact that Margayya attains a meteoric rise and bewildering success as a private banker and has roomfuls of currency notes evidences that there is abundance of money in Malgudi though in order to attract it Margayya has to offer interest at the high rate of twenty per cent, and the government bank fails to attract this money because it gives interest at the rate of only three per cent. The fact that at Dr. Pal's advice a large number of depositors withdraw their sum of money from Margayya's bank with the result that the bank fails and Margayya goes insolvent, signifies that the depositors do not feel their money safe in a private bank and that they are bold enough to withdraw their money as and when they suspect some threat to its existence and appreciation. In other words, the people of neither of these two categories leave their money at the mercy of fate: they risk it no doubt and bankers' practice of going insolvent and the depositer's getting little or nothing in that situation have made them oversensitive.

The fact that the showcase of the optician from whom Margayya buys spectacles but pays no money in return begins "to display powder-puffs, scents, chocolate-bars..." (*TFE*, p. 4), indicates that it is a part of India where powder-puffs, scents and chocolate-bars sell well and bring the shop-keeper a more handsome return than do the spectacles which are almost a necessity for old people. The implication is that those who buy these items of luxury pay better than those who buy spectacles. In other words, in the India of *The Financial Expert*, money is flowing into the pockets of the sellers of powder-puffs, scents and chocolate-bars, the publishers of pornographic books, wine-sellers, the beneficiaries of gambling, and the fathers of bridegrooms. The fact that a tourist's home is run by Dr. Pal, also signifies that some people here have money enough to spend on sight-seeing. The existence of the club which Dr. Pal and Balu join, affirms that a substantial number of people of the town are rich enough to spend their money on such 'pleasures'. Another meaning implied here is that clubs have an undesirable influence on people's morals. Since Balu gets the job of a supervisor over boys selling tea in Madras as soon as he reaches the city, it can be inferred that in Narayan's Madras menial jobs of the kind are available in plenty and one can get one of them quite easily. The fact also shows that tea sells very well in the market.

Since in Malgudi there are people who pay for the last rites of a destitute so liberally that some of the people engaged in "scavenging, load-carrying and stone-quarrying" (*TFE*, p. 22) are able not only to give "a gorgeous funeral to the body but also to save as much as to drink and make merry for three or four days" (*TFE*, p. 22), it is evident that if there live charitable people in the town on the one hand, there also live people who cheat them and misuse people's charity to earn small benefits for themselves. The fact also highlights the traditional Indian value of charity in some people living in Narayan's India too.

The bank officials who figure in the novel do not explain the details of the peasants' accounts to them on the ground that they are busy (*TFE*, p. 3), avoid giving a customer more than one loan-application form (*TFE*, p. 2), find excuse, like a peasant's not having his pass-book with him, for not telling rural customers the details of their accounts (*TFE*, p. 2), and compel

them to placate them "with an offering in cash or kind" (*TFE*, p. 3). All these facts and the fact that Margayya remains busy throughout the day helping peasants in getting loans indicate that these bank officials are not adequately sympathetic towards the peasants, try to refrain from helping them and indulge in the practice of taking bribes.

Narayan also mentions certain facts which throw light on the political activities of the town. For instance, it is evident that elections for municipalities are held here and the persons in power play the trick of getting welfare activities done shortly before elections so that they are able to get people's votes before what they have done has become stale. The fact is evidenced by the Municipal officials' having left the gutter of the Vinayak Mudali Street, uncleaned till the next elections and people's saying, "They are only looking for the election voter there" (*TFE*, p. 33). The fact implies that people working in the political field are clever enough to use their measures for people's welfare for political gains for themselves. It also throws light on the fact that the voter's memory is short and that they vote for only those candidates who are engaged in welfare activities at the moment rather than those who have worked for them in the past. Like their political masters, the voters are also guided by immediate consideration and not long term benefits.

Technology is being used for both desirable and undesirable purposes: if in this city there are printing presses in which newspapers, for whom Dr. Pal works as a journalist, are printed, there is also Madan Lal's printing press in which the pornographic book *Domestic Harmony* is printed. Machines here have made Mangal Seth rich and unlike the cobbling machine in Mulk Raj Anand's story 'The Cobbler and the Machine' have driven none to a pre-mature death.

The fact that the book *Domestic Harmony* sells so well that Margayya gets money enough not only to live comfortably but also to spare for the election for the post of the Secretary of the governing body of a school, signifies that Narayan's India is a flourishing market for books of pornography written in English. That there are laws here to discourage the publication of such books is evident from Madan Lal's saying to Margayya that he will consult his lawyer before agreeing to print the book (*TFE*, p. 81), but since no action is taken against either the author or

the publisher in the novel, the importance of laws is implict in this India of Narayan.

The India of *The Financial Expert* has in it not only those who make people resort to praying to gods and goddesses to achieve their ends but also those who believe they can achieve their ends through prayers. The priest of the temple Margayya visits, the Municipal Chairman, and the *sari*-manufacturing family are the people of this kind. However, the novelist does not give any suggestion to the effect that the priest makes people believe in the efficacy of the prayer in order to cheat people into giving him money.[2] So far as Margayya is concerned the priest takes nothing from him. The people who believe in the efficacy of prayers and devotion include the handloom weaver whose son is suffering from a wasting disease (*TFE*, p. 26). The priest is able to tell Margayya the story of Markandaya and expresses his belief in the teaching of the *Bhagvadgita* that action is man's duty, reward not his concern (*TFE*, p. 26). He also tells the story as told in the *Mahabharata* (*TFE*, p. 29). All this signifies that Narayan's priest is a well-read man rather than an ignorant person. This priest not only does not take anything from Margayya but also gives him plantains and a piece of coconut from the offerings to Hanuman, the deity in the temple (*TFE*, pp. 27-28). Margayya also went to the temple of Thirupati when for twelve years after his marriage he remained childless (*TFE*, p. 34).

However, what should not be overlooked is that in spite of all his criticism of the Indians, the narrator is all praise for at least one man, namely, "a famous Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Sir..., who had been knighted for his devotion to co-operation after he had, in fact, lost his voice explaining co-operative principles to peasants in the village at one end and to the officials in-charge of the files at the secretariat end" (*TFE*, p. 1). The novelist does not reveal his identity, his nativity and his religion but it is evident that he was a faithful servant of the British Raj in India and had worked for the British so faithfully that the British rulers of India knighted him sometime before 1914 A.D. as it was in the year 1914 after his death that the Central Co-operative Mortgage Bank of Malgudi was built with his savings which he had left for the construction of the Bank (*TFE*, p. 1).

The Finanacial Expert is a portrait of various facets of rural India. R.K. Narayan's realism touches every aspect of a developing country vis-a-vis its representation in small towns, villages and countryside, it is a tribute to his creativity that good and evil are painted as two dimensions of the flux, that is, life.

Notes and References

1. R.K. Narayan, *The Financial Expert* (*TFE*, for short) (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1987 (1952), p. 23. The subsequent references to the text are to this edition of the book.
2. The fact signifies that Narayan's Hindu priests are different from Rabindranath Tagore's Hindu priests like Raghupati who is a cheat.
3. *Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana, ma karmapha-lahetu-rabhu sangostwakarmani*

(The Bhagvadgita II, 47)

4

The Gandhian Resistance in the Crucible in *Shadow from Ladakh*

A study of Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* brings to light also the novelist's views about Mahatma Gandhi's technique of passive resistance. One comes to know of these views of the novelist when one takes into consideration Satyajit Sen's reactions to two aggressions, namely, China's aggression on India and Bhashkar Roy's attempt to annex the land of Gandhigram and their outcomes. In either of these cases Satyajit Sen tries to resist the aggressor in the Gandhian way of inflicting pain on oneself rather than on the adversary and thereby making an attempt to change the adversary's heart. That Satyajit tries to make the Chinese vacate the Indian territory with the Gandhian technique of taking out a peaceful demonstration is evident from his resolution: "He would take a Peace Mission, *Shanti Sena*, to the Himalayan snowlines, travelling first by railroad and bus to Kashmir's capital city, then marching afoot. Across Ladakh to the disputed territory close to Aksai-Chin, The *Shanti Sena* would be armed with the lost slogan of brotherhood between two nations"[1] and by his attempt to vindicate his stand when he tells the Minister without Portfolio: "We have to touch the spirit of Chinese people

so that we may be brothers again" (*SL*, p. 194). Likewise, when he tells the members of the village Council: "... let us follow the line of individual resistance. The line laid down by Gandhi in the days when Japanese soldiers were pounding into the Assam Valley." (*SL*, p. 353), he is trying to persuade his friends to use the Gandhian technique of trying to touch the spirit of his adversary, who is trying to capture the land of Gandhigram. If we examine closely in which case the technique succeeds and how far, we shall be in a position to make definite assertions about what Bhabani Bhattacharya believes Gandhism to be and how effective an instrument of fighting he finds it to be.

The question as to how an aggression can be resisted has been taken up by thinkers like Jesus Christ, Thoreau, Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Meeting force with force to throw the aggressor out of one's territory is a common practice in the world, but the thinkers named above have suggested alternative value-based ways with the result that they have drawn attention of a large number of thinkers. Jesus Christ's suggestion to the victim to offer the other cheek has evoked ridicule or astonishment rather than any following worth mentioning. In India we have the four classical paths, viz., of persuasion, of purchase, of punishment, and of diplomacy.[2] Jesus Christ's suggestion reappeared in a slightly modified form in Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" when he observed:

> If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of Government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth, certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.[3]

Thoreau's way is a middle path as it can be placed somewhere between the path of no resistance and that of armed resistance. It involves one's violating an unjust law and

undergoing punishment for that. Gandhi used this form of passive resistance in Indians' fight for the freedom of their country from the British rule and even called his movement of 1921 'Civil Disobedience Movement'. How effectively it can be used by the victims of injustice, oppression and aggression has been discussed and debated upon considerably both in India and abroad. Martin Luther King's fight for the blacks' rights was by and large Gandhian.

Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to be suggesting in *Shadow from Ladakh* that the Gandhian technique of passive resistance can give the desired result only when one's adversary has at least softness, if not warmth, for one and that it is likely to fail when the adversary has no sympathy for one. This assertion is being made on the ground that even though Satyajit Sen resolves to encounter both the aggressions in the Gandhian way [see *Supra*], he transforms his resolution into action only in case of Bhaskar Roy's aggression and not in case of the Chinese aggression. One can easily perceive a decrease in Satyajit's keenness to launch his scheme of a peace-march. When Satyajit tries to bring it home to pressman that "[v] iolence had always hurt its perpetrator as much as its victim—that was a fact of history. In the final reckoning moral resistance alone could be creative" (*SL*, p. 213) he is simply echoing Mahatma Gandhi's views and so he seems to be following Gandhi without any reservations. Though Satyajit knows that Mao is a war-monger like Jenghiz Khan, as he has read Mao's words: "The whole world can be remodelled only with the gun. War can be abolished only through war. To get rid of the gun, we must first grasp it in our hands" (*SL*, p. 78). He is sad to find that the Chinese have "annexed sixteen thousand square miles of territory that had been an integral part of India" (*SL*, p. 79), and he is shocked to realize that it was much more than a border problem for India: "It was India's China problem—for all time"(*SL*, p. 79); yet he has full faith in the Gandhian form of passive resistance until he meets people in Delhi and when he reaches Delhi he hopes the Chinese women to sympathise with him as is evidenced by his telling Bireswar: "The men may still hanker for the glory of Asian leadership. Not the women. The women of China will be the country's salvation" (*SL*, pp. 191-92). But when he is in Delhi he gets more information about the Chinese from Bireswar, the Minister Without Portfolio and the pressman. For instance, the

questions pressmen put to him, namely, "Was there room in the present world for such idealism as the peace-march embodied? Would the Chinese understand any language other than that of strength?" (*SL*, p. 213) draw his attention to the fact that the Chinese have little sympathy for the Indians. Bireswar tells him: "The Women of China are drunk with emancipation" (*SL*, p. 192). And the Minister Without Portfolio tells him: "China today is as self-centred, as chauvinistic, as Britain used to be in the hey-day of its colonial expansionism" (*SL*, p. 195). It is in view of such pieces of information that he changes his mind and summons "unlimited" volunteers to the peace march (*SL*, p. 214) dropping his original plan of a peace march consisting of only "four men and one woman" (*SL*, p. 105). When he is waiting for "unlimited volunteers" (*SL*, p. 213), he seems to be trying to find excuses for not taking the peace march, as even Suruchi and Sumita feel that the peace march is being delayed for no satisfactory reason, as their feelings recorded in the following words indicate:

> Was the peace march assiged to another page? No, not a word anywhere. Was it too early yet to expect reactions? A fateful decision took time to mature. Supreme sacrifice was involved, nothing less. May be the papers a few days hence would convey all there was to know.
>
> The days went by, and there was no word. The call could well have been a myth. (*SL*, p. 223)

Otherwise he should have given at least the minimum number of willing volunteers as "unlimited" can be the upper limit rather than the lower one. The fact of the matter is that he has in his mind the views of his friends like the following one of the Minister Without Portfolio. "Satyajit, your march would be plain suicide. The Chinese would not understand what it was all about. You can't even blame them for that" (*SL*, p. 196). Obviously he has not remained keen to take out the peace march because at least unconsciously, if not consciously, he seems to have realized that the proposed peace march is not likely to give the desired results because in their hearts the Chinese have no softness for him. If he had been keen to march to Ladakh, he could have announced his programme and led his followers to the front without caring for their number, as Gandhi never

waited for crowds to come to follow him.

It is also significant that Satyajit's declaration to take out a peace march to Ladakh is taken cognizance of by only the Minister Without Portfolio rather than by the Prime Minister. And even the Minister Without Portfolio has no hope of the success of Satyajit's Mission as is evident from his reaction recorded in the following extract:

> Satyajit pondered for a time before he spoke.
>
> "It's not easy for me to lose faith in the Long March. Somewhere in Chinese consciousness the Long March must linger still, even if it has died in the hearts of the rulers in Peking."
>
> The Minister smiled, faintly, and the lines of fatigue in his face grew deeper. (*SL*, p. 195)

The Minister's faint smile conveys the fact that he regards Satyajit's perception as incorrect and believes him to have little knowledge of the facts of life. And this Minister is a person who must have been at least sympathetic towards Gandhism, as the narrator reports: "The Minister Without Portfolio had been close to Gandhi, as close as Nehru himself. Satyajit had recollections of him in Sevagram" (*SL*, p. 193). If even such a man has no faith in the peace march there must be something wrong with the whole idea of it. Nay, the Minister is in full sympathy with Bhaskar's view that it is industrialization alone that can solve India's problems as Bhashkar says: "Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defense—a compulsion of our current history" (*SL*, p. 27) and Bhashkar has come to India because he was called from America by the Government of India through a Minister as is evident from the following report:

> "What's to be done?"
> "Rapid industrialization," the Minister said.
> "Why don't we get on with it?"
> "You think it's as easy as all that?"

> "Easy?" Sharply, "Why does it have to be easy?"
>
> Their glances met, and each searched the other's mind for a point of contact. The visitor's face became happy. He looked down reflectively into his glass and took several sips before he spoke again.
>
> "Come to India," he said, "We need men like you." (*SL*, pp. 32-33).

And this Minister was none else than the Minister Without Portfolio as is evident from the following report: "The Minister Without Portfolio was a man of reason. Bhashkar recalled their meeting in Washington 'India needs men like you', he had said" (*SL*, p. 186) though in the pre-Independence days he was, as has been pointed out earlier, as close to Gandhi as Nehru (*SL*, p. 193).

All this unequivocally indicates that according to Bhabani Bhattacharya many of the persons who had been close to Gandhi had ceased to be Gandhians and had become the votaries of industrialization. It is Bireswar who admits the fact in frank terms : "A handful of years after freedom was won, we've released ourselves from the architect of that freedom by giving him a shrine on the bank of the Jamuna river" (*SL*, p. 215).

One can say that the Chinese resolution to vacate the captured Indian territory and to go back to the McMahon Line was an outcome of the rising of the feeling of humanity in their hearts. But the novelist clearly indicates that the real cause behind the Chinese unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal to the McMahon Line was not that hearts of the Chinese had changed but that they had their own problems and that there were international pressures. The suggestion lies embodied in the interpretations given by persons in the lobby of the Parliament House, although Satyajit is of the view that it is a case of the assertion of humanity in the Chinese hearts as Satyajit thinks: "His faith was vindicated. Chinese humanity had asserted itself—even before the forces of non-violence had been marshaled" (*SL*, p. 338)); he finds people in the lobby of the Parliament House saying that the Chinese knew that in winter snow would block their lines of supply and reinforcement (*SL*, p. 339), that the Soviet Union "had put strong pressure on the Chinese" (*SL*, p. 339) and that the Chinese had been informed of the American Seventh Fleet's readiness "to strike" (*SL*, p. 339).

So far as Satyajit's Gandhian fight of passive resistance to save Gandhigram from the avaricious clutches of the Chief Engineer of Steeltown is concerned, it is a different story: Satyajit's fast unto death makes the Secretariat of Delhi "all agog" (*SL*, p. 357) and not only the workers but also the Chief Engineer of the Steeltown come marching to Satyajit's house shouting "Victory, victory to Satyajit" (*SL*, p. 372). The fact can lead one to say that this is a victory of the Gandhian resistance. One can also infer that it is the fast that changes Bhashkar's heart. This is the success of Satyajit no doubt, but the success has come to him partly by his Gandhian resistance and partly on account of some other factors. So far as the Government of India is concerned, the only man disturbed in Delhi by Satyajit's fast is Bireswar, who is Satyajit's friend. It is natural for him to be disturbed by Satyajit's fast as he loves Satyajit. But the only outcome of the Secretariat's being "all agog" is that the government offers an alternative "site for a new Gandhigram" (*SL*, p. 357) without putting any hurdle before Bhashkar. It is noticeable that the offer has nothing new or attractive about it as Bhashkar had decided to accord Gandhigram this compensation the moment he had thought of Lohapur's expansion: "What was Gandhigram but an idea? The idea could be transplanted to some other soil. The men of the village would get full compensation. Each peasant of Gandhigram could buy elsewhere twice the measure of land he now had under plow. Each mud house could be exchanged for a brick house" (*SL*, p. 38). Nay, even Bireswar tries to persuade Satyajit that the country needs Bhashkar: "You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhashkar" (*SL*, p. 358). In other words, if Bireswar had not been a Member of Parliament, Satyajit's fast unto death would have gone unnoticed. The extent to which it is successful is decided by the softness that is there in Bhashkar's heart for Satyajit. If Satyajit had been a stranger to Bhashkar, it is doubtful if the latter would have been moved by the former's fast.

Admittedly, Bhashkar too has little nobility in him and he is too bad to even become an idealist as like the Devil he tries to make Rupa entice Satyajit and to draw him into the pit of lechery when he says to hers: "Satyajit is the very soul of Gandhigram. He is Gandhigram. Without his guidance the structure of ideas he's been building will topple like a thing of sand.... If only Satyajit could be destroyed.... I am thinking of the inner man. The man of crystal

purity. The man who abhors vice. Vice in his own reckoning, of course. Let him fall from his moral height, and he will declare himself unworthy of leadership" (*SL*, p. 133). The man who has such designs on the morality of a virtuous man must be extraordinarily vicious even though Mrs. Sarojini Mehra describes him as "a saint" (*SL*, p. 36). A Valmiki can change from a robber into a poet as his vice is based on ignorance, but Bhashkar is a different kind of man: he has in his heart a malignity which has a far-ranging motive behind it. There is little possibility of his heart's changing in the positive direction. But in spite of that he lets Satyajit's passive resistance succeed against him because he has a weakness: he is in love with Satyajit's daughter. It is this love that makes him soft towards Satyajit and his Gandhigram.

One who studies Bhashkar's thoughts and feelings on the occasion can easily find that the change in his thoughts is brought about by his love for Sumita. Here is the passage in which the narrator reports what Bhashkar is thinking at the moment:

> Bhaskar stared into the night. There lay the village that had forced upon him a revision of his mental attitudes. Satyajit had had his share. And Suruchi. But more than either... Sumita. She went away, but the power that she was remained.
>
> He recalled his first impression of Sumita. He had not liked her. The coarse white garb, the eyes too big and calm. She was far from his idea of an attractive woman. And later, when he had known her at close range, he had felt repelled by his glimpse of the father image.
>
> Strange, then, that she became a fixation in his mind. He could not have believed that such a thing might happen. It happened against his conscious will. (*SL*, p. 371)

Here Bhashkar has unequivocally acknowledged that it is Sumita more than Suruchi or Satyajit or the village that has "forced upon him a revision of his mental attitudes", that Sumita has become "a power" for him and that she has become "a fixation in his mind". Obviously it is his softness for Sumita that makes him forsake his plan to capture Gandhigram. One becomes curious to know whether Bhashkar would have revised his mental attitude if Satyajit had not been the father of Sumita. Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to be giving a negative answer.

Notes and References

1. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (London: W.H. Allen 1967), p. 64. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*SL* for short) refer to this edition.
2. The Sanskrit words employed to describe them are *sama, dama, danda* and *bheda.*
3. Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience", *A Nineteenth Century American Reader,* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Washington: United States Information Agency, 1989), p. 236.

5

Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*: A Plea for Syntagmatic Relationship

The central issue in Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* is as to what places spiritualism and materialism occupy in life and whether there exists a paradigmatic relationship between them. The fact comes to light when one turns to the rivalry between Bhashkar and Satyajit, who are the souls of the localities of Steeltown and Gandhigram respectively, brought into existence for material advancement and spiritual upliftment respectively. That Steeltown or Lohapur is a seat of material advancement comes to light when one reads Bhashkar's views about the role of steel in life, such as the following passage embodies: "Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a new meaning. It stands for our country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defense—a compulsion of our current history. To meet the demands is far from easy."[1] Bhashkar, the Chief Engineer of the steel plant of Lohapur identifies progress with the production of machines as, his statement quoted above implies, the machines will help one

to produce more foodgrains and industrial goods including weapons with which soldiers can defend the freedom of their country. And it is in entire agreement with the intentions behind its existence that Steeltown has an impressive appearance as is evident from what Sumita finds it to be: "It was a breath-taking view. Masses of concrete structure stretched away for miles in well ordered formations. Tall figures of brick rose skywards, emitting smoke. These were gigantic skeletons of red-painted steel. The white sunlit face of a clock on a tower. . ." (*SL*, p. 204). The description signifies that Steeltown is being regarded as the fountain-head of the industrialization of the country and modernization of her agriculture so that poverty gives way to prosperity.

Though there is nothing immoral about mass production, Bhashkar, the man responsible for most of the vital activities in the town, has little hesitation in justifying vice, as is evident from his statements in the following report of conversation between him and Satyajit:

> "What's wrong with vice?" the unexpected query came flashing. Satyajit, taken aback had no ready reply.
> "Let me tell you, Sir; vice is the darkness and gives value to light. No darkness and light is hurtful. Let there be some virtue, some vice. Let them be juxtaposed, balanced."

Satyajit had no comment still, and the hard voice ground on:

> "Virtue and vice together give life its colour, savour. That's what I've experienced personally. One without the other could easily destroy us." (*SL*, p. 29)

Thus, Bhashkar stands for material advancement and rejects spiritualism altogether, meaning thereby that he regards materialism and spiritualism to be having a paradigmatic relationship between them and of the two he has chosen the former. The way he vindicates vice signifies that he regards vice to be an integral part of life and, so also that of a balanced personality. His arguing that virtue without vice can destroy one [see *supra*] makes it evident that he regards vice as an

indispensable ingredient of a properly developed personality. This is nothing but a sheer vindication of vicious ways and a rejection of the spiritual values because the adjective 'vicious' is employed to describe a person who has given himself to even one vice though he is virtuous in other respects. For instance, the word 'liar' is employed to describe one who tells lies whenever it suits him, although on other occasions he is absolutely truthful for there exists nobody who always tells lies and makes no true statement at all. Even Falstaff does not always tell lies. Likewise, a vicious man too, is virtuous at least in some respects and is not one hundred per cent vicious. So when Bhashkar wants vice and virtue to be juxtaposed and balanced, he is not describing a balanced personality, but he is vindicating the ways of a vicious man. If Bhashkar's arguments are accepted as correct, a vicious man with a few virtues will have to be regarded as an ideal person and virtuous man without any vice at all will be regarded as an unbalanced personality likely to destroy himself or the whole society. It is in the light of this fact that one can safely assert that Bhashkar rejects spiritualism altogether and upholds material advancement through vicious ways too. That is why his approach is comparable to that of Chārvāk according to whom one must try to attain prosperity not only by hook but also by crook.[2]

Satyajit, too, finds materialism and spiritualism to have a paradigmatic relationship between them and he chooses spiritualism and rejects materialism, as his Gandhigram is a seat of spiritual attainment with no regard to any advancement in the material field. It is an outcome of Satyajit's approach that the inhabitants of Gandhigram lead a life of poverty and keep themselves deprived of the things which a larger number of people, below the poverty line, are found to be in possession of. The following sentences describing Satyajit's beloved daughter Sumita make the fact clear: "White-garbed like a widow, and walking barefoot. The only Indian girl of her age who wore no adornment, not even glass, nor the customary red mark on the brow" (*SL*, p. 38). There is no electricity here and late at night one finds here "the dim flicker of a single oil lamp perched on a squat wooden post" (*SL*, p. 38). Satyajit is not an ordinary inhabitant of the village: he is the man about whom the Chief Engineer of Lohapur says: "*He* is Gandhigram" (*SL*, p. 133). But

even his daughter walks barefoot! This is so because Satyajit wants the people of Gandhigram to consume nothing that they do not produce; the villagers have to remain true to "the concept of self-sufficiency" (*SL*, p. 40). In this village it is the spiritual values that are cherished and material gains are looked down upon, as is evident from the narrator's remark: "the village with its two hundred mud houses seeking to build a set of values, values to be lived, to be expressed in terms of deed, complete equality, unreserved fraternity limitless non-violence, as much in thought as in action. Slogans glibly voiced everywhere; in Gandhigram they had to be real. The Gandhigram village was not its mud walls alone. It was spirit. The spirit of man striving to transcend the physical" (*SL*, p. 46). Since here the stress is on values rather than on production. Gandhigram can safely be regarded as a symbol of the spiritual outlook of life. The approach is comparable to that of Bhartrihari's *dheera* who never deviates from the path of justice, whether people well-versed in wordly affairs condemn him or admire him, whether prosperity comes to him or deserts him, whether he is killed instantly or is allowed to live for ages.[3] Or, better, it reminds one of Jesus Christ's approach that lies embodied in his words: "A camel can go through the eye of a needle but a rich man cannot enter the gate of heaven".[4]

Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to deem either of these approaches incomplete, as the unethical materialist outlook has been shown producing hollow people and the imprudent spiritualist outlook has been shown to be a cause behind abject poverty. Let us see how this has been done. So far as the unethical materialist approach is concerned it makes Bhashkar not only champion the cause of vice when he is shown, as has been pointed out earlier, asking Satyajit: "What's wrong with vice?" (*SL*, p. 29), but also ask Rupa to tempt Satyajit to become lustful towards her, when he instructs her: " 'If only Satyajit could be destroyed. . .I am thinking of the Inner man. The man of crystal purity. The man who abhors vice. Vice is his only reckoning, of course. Let him fall from his moral height, and he will declare himself unworthy of leadership" (*SL*, p. 133). His sending Rupa to Satyajit reminds one of Lord Indra's sending Menka to Vishwamitra to cause the latter's fall or of what Mephistophles does to Dr. Faustus in Marlowe's play about the learned doctor's fall. Moreover, it is

the unethical materialist approach that is responsible for many of the intrigues and much of hollowness in the lives of the inhabitants of Lohapur. It is Sarojini Mehra who perceives all this when she goes to the Lohapur Club and finds ladies there trying to outwit one another in trying to entrap Bhashkar into marrying this or that girl. Sarojini finds these Lohapur women to be having little valuable thinking in their heads and less moral scruples in their hearts. For instance, Mrs. Leena Malick, who devises the plan of catching the Chief Engineer through his private secretary, has blank expression on her face when she hears from Mrs. Mehra the expression "Public Sector" (*SL*, p. 113) meaning thereby that intellectually she is very poorly equipped. Furthermore, Leena's conscience does not prick when she plays the trick of "negat[ing] her daughter's rival by an amusingly simple device—presenting her as a boy!" (*SL*, p. 156). Even Bhashkar is conscious of the hollowness of the people of Steeltown as he ponders: "Would he let Sumita be transmuted into the dancer in red garb—the person behind the dancer? He did not know who she was, but he knew the type. He knew the pattern and all the other patterns in Steeltown—at every level. Section Twelve longing to be Eleven... and Ten. Insatiety, frustration, intrigue graft" (*SL*, p. 157).

The incompleteness of the unethical materialist philosophy is also evident from the fact that its high priest Bhashkar has at last, to lead the procession to Gandhigram shouting: "Victory, victory to Satyajit:" (*SL*, p. 371) and he, while staring at Gandhigram, acknowledges: "There lay the village that had forced upon him a revision of his mental attitudes" (*SL*, p. 371). If unethical materialism had been complete in itself Bhashkar would not have been compelled to bow down before Satyajit and would not have felt the need to revise his mental attitude.

Likewise, the weakness of Satyajit's approach is indicated by the fact that it calls upon its votaries to deprive themselves of even ordinary amenities, to lead a life of abject poverty and to make endless sacrifices. In order to remove violence, for example, Satyajit wants "[a] hundred thousand men prepared to die" (*SL*, p. 175). To make it explicit, he wants one hundred thousand innocent men to sacrifice themselves to bring it home to the war-mongers that it is bad to fight! One wonders whether such a sacrifice is justified on grounds of prudence. It is Satyajit's

approach that is responsible for the facts that on her arms Sumita has no bangles as Satyajit regards them as "nonessentials" (*SL*, p. 40), the only gold in the house [is the gold chain which is Suruchi's] mother's last gift" (*SL*, p. 178) and since there are few metal utensils with him rice is boiled in his kitchen "in the earthen pot covered with a saucer" (*SL*, p. 179). In other words, Satyajit is leading a life much below the poverty line. The fact of the matter is that clothes, footwear and utensils are the bare necessities of life and they should not be denied to anyone on any philosophical ground. And if these things have to be provided, the efficient means of producing them have to be accepted rather than rejected. Even Satyajit has to admit that he is "by no means opposed to production" (*SL*, p. 28). What Satyajit does not pay heed to is that mass production itself has nothing vicious in it and that there is nothing noble about one's being able to produce very little after a lot of labour. Moreover, a man not using machines has as many chances to become vicious as a man using the most efficient machines unless he is strong willed enough to remain virtuous. The fact of the matter is that there is no kinship between cottage level production and virtue; nor is there any kinship between mass production and vice. Satyajit seems to have gone to the extent of becoming a fanatic as he makes Sumita remain barefooted because there is no shoe-maker in the village and Satyajit wants his village to be self-reliant. However, he should not have forgotten the fact that even Robinson Crusoe uses some kind of foot-wear to protect his feet from thorns, pebbles and the like. One is tempted to ask Satyajit as to why he rides in a railway train when he goes to Delhi, and why he permits his wife to board an aeroplane when she goes to and comes back from Moscow, as neither the railway train nor the aeroplane has been manufactured by the inhabitants of Gandhigram and ridding in either of them involves violating the principle of self-sufficiency. In other words, even Satyajit cannot do without the gifts of the production-centred philosophy. This is the experience of Sumita too as she has to change herself and resolve not to remain barefooted when she is in Delhi and tells Nandini: "Nandini, I have nothing against shoes. The fact is that our peasantry are too poor to buy footwear and I try to live as they do. Here in Delhi, I must adjust myself to city life" (*SL*, p. 253). As a matter of fact the argument she advances for

not wearing shoes is an argument that validates mass production. Since the footwears produced by cottage industry are too dear for peasants to buy, they must be produced on a large scale so that they are available at low prices and peasants can afford to buy them. Sumita has been a strict follower of her father but there comes a stage when she wears a coloured sari and a dark green jacket and has her wrists adorned with churis (*SL*, p. 155). Nay she becomes a votary of a syntagmatic relationship between spiritualism and materialism, when she has a desire to go to Steeltown and see everything there as is evidenced by the following piece of conversation between her and Bhashkar:

> "Remember your promise?"
> "What promise, Sumita?"
> "You will take me to Steeltown and show me everything" (*SL*, p. 373).

In the light of all this the name 'balanced approach' can be given to the approach in which we have the mass production of Lohapur and the ethical values of Gandhigram. The approach has been summed up in the following piece of the stream of Suruchi's consciousness: "The great city with its giant machines had something vital to gain from the small centre of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self-abnegation" (*SL*, p. 284). Suruchi has a high opinion of the Steeltown as she calls it "[t] he great city" but at the same time she is aware of the greatness of Gandhigram as it has, for her, something "vital" to give to that town. Thus, *Shadow from Ladakh* is a plea for a syntagmatic relationship between spiritualism and materialism.

Notes and References

1. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (London: W.H. Allen 1967), p. 27. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*SL* for short) , incorporated in the text refer to this edition.
2. The approach lies embodied in the couplet:
   Yavajjeevet sukham jeevet rinamkritwa ghritam pivet bhasmibhutasya dehasya punuragaman kutah.
   (*Sarvadarshan Sangraha*, Charvak Darshan 1.)
   which means: "So long as one is alive one should live happily and

not wearing shoes is an argument that validates mass production. Since the footwears produced by cottage industry are too dear for peasants to buy, they must be produced on a large scale so that they are available at low prices and peasants can afford to buy them. Sumita has been a strict follower of her father but there comes a stage when she wears a coloured sari and a dark green jacket and has her wrists adorned with churis (*SL*, p. 155). Nay she becomes a votary of a syntagmatic relationship between spiritualism and materialism, when she has a desire to go to Steeltown and see everything there as is evidenced by the following piece of conversation between her and Bhashkar:

> "Remember your promise?"
> "What promise, Sumita?"
> "You will take me to Steeltown and show me everything" (*SL*, p. 373).

In the light of all this the name 'balanced approach' can be given to the approach in which we have the mass production of Lohapur and the ethical values of Gandhigram. The approach has been summed up in the following piece of the stream of Suruchi's consciousness: "The great city with its giant machines had something vital to gain from the small centre of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self-abnegation" (*SL*, p. 284). Suruchi has a high opinion of the Steeltown as she calls it "[t] he great city" but at the same time she is aware of the greatness of Gandhigram as it has, for her, something "vital" to give to that town. Thus, *Shadow from Ladakh* is a plea for a syntagmatic relationship between spiritualism and materialism.

Notes and References

1. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (London: W.H. Allen 1967), p. 27. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*SL* for short) , incorporated in the text refer to this edition.
2. The approach lies embodied in the couplet:
   Yavajjeevet sukham jeevet rinamkritwa ghritam pivet bhasmibhutasya dehasya punuragaman kutah.
   (*Sarvadarshan Sangraha*, Charvak Darshan 1.)
   which means: "So long as one is alive one should live happily and

drink *ghee* (purified butter), even if one gets loans for the purpose; for the dead body once burnt to ashes never comes back into existence".

3. The Sanskrit couplet runs as follows:
   nindantu neeti nipuna yadi va stavantu
   Lakshmi samavishatu gachchhatu va yatheshtam
   adyaiva va maranamastu yugantareva
   nyayatpathe pravachalanti padam na dheera
   (Bhartrihari, *Neeti Shatak*, 84)
4. St. Luke 18: 25.

6

Communal Riots in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*

In his novel *Azadi* Chaman Nahal fictionally treats the communal riots which broke out in Punjab just before the partition, shows what the rioters did to the religious minorities in both West and East Punjabs when the riots broke out, examines the behaviour and the reaction of the victims of the riots and also gives suggestions as to what the concerned authorities should have done in order to avert the riots. The fact that the riots treated in the novel are those that broke out in 1947 A.D. is evident from the novelist's opening the novel with the sentence "It was the third of June, 1947"[1] and his referring to various other dates around the 15th of August 1947.

Although the narrator tries to give the impression that the relations prevailing between the Muslims and the Hindus in and around Sialkot were almost harmonious, the tale makes it evident that riots had occurred in the town earlier and the Hindus feared they would be repeated if there was partition, and that the communal co-operation was only skin-deep. That the narrator tries to bring out that the Hindus and the Mulsims were quite close to each other in the pre-partition days is evident from

his showing that the Hindus used Urdu as much as their own language and that the young of the two communities, especially those of the families which were friendly, went to the extent of falling in love and thinking of becoming husband and wife. The first of these two has been suggested when the narrator writes about Lala Kanshiram: "And when it came to writing, whether the entries in his shop-ledger or a note to the vendor down the road, he wrote in Urdu, who said it was the language of Muslims? He had learned it from his father and from the primary teacher in his village a few miles out of Sialkot, and neither of the two was a Muslim" (*Azadi*, p. 14). And the second of these two has been suggested by Arun's being in love with Chaudhari Barkat Ali's daughter Nurul Nisar and their planning to become husband and wife. That the narrator suggests that communal feelings were induced in people's minds by the creation of Pakistan is evidenced by his observation about the love between Arun and Nur: "Their classmates had long known of their romance, but after the announcement of Pakistan they had become suspect. He was now a 'Hindu' boy carrying on with a 'Muslim' girl. And the Muslim boys in the college stood watching them menacingly" (*Azadi*, p. 91). The narrator suggests that there existed cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims when he shows that the Muslims helped the Hindus in making preparations for their festivals like Dussehra when he writes: "Huge effigies of Ravana and his evil associates were burned on that ground, each year. It was a Hindu festival but the effigies were made by Muslim workmen; the crackers and the fireworks too were supplied by the Muslims" (*Azadi*, p. 93). When the narrator narrates: "Arun went to Arya Samaj School and Munir to Islamia School. The names meant nothing to the boys. There was a Khalsa School in the city, and a Mission School too. Maybe the English made those parochial distinctions, or may be the different communities wanted it that way. The children themselves did not think on ethnic lines" (*Azadi*, p. 99) the purpose is to suggest that the students of the two communities were not conscious of their belonging to separate communities. However, the fact that the harmony was only skin-deep becomes evident from the Hindus' reactions to Jawahar Lal Nehru's broadcast to the nation. As on hearing the broadcast Kanshi Ram and his companions exclaim: "But what nonsense was this of no

ALLAHABAD.

panic, no violence, full protection from the government, peace the main object! Had he gone mad? Didn't he know his people? Didn't he know the Muslims?" (*Azadi*, p. 65). This reaction signifies that the Hindus were absolutely sure that the Muslims would indulge in violence and that the government would fail to protect them. The last sentence in the passage signifies that the Muslims had indulged in killing the Hindus in the past quite often with the result that the Hindus had come to believe them to be absolutely intolerant of the Hindus. Likewise, Sardar Teja Singh's asking Lala Kanshi Ram: "What will happen to us, Lalaji?" (*Azadi*, p. 66) signifies that he was fully aware of the fact that the Muslims were not going to tolerate the presence of the Sikhs in Pakistan. What is more significant is that even Arun, a representative of the younger generation, is conscious of the fact that the people of his community are not going to be tolerated in a Muslim country and the fact becomes evident from the following piece of conversation between Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun Kumar:

569751

> "I suppose we'll continue here. Why can't Hindus and Sikhs live in Pakistan? Why should they wish us harm?" he said without much conviction.
>
> "Be realistic, father," said Arun. (*Azadi*, p. 66)

Arun's wanting his father to be realistic signifies his trying to make the latter realize that the Muslims are not going to tolerate the presence of Hindus in Pakistan. If there prevailed communal harmony in Punjab in the pre-partition days, there was no justification behind Padmini's coming to Lala Kanshi Ram on hearing the shouts of "Allah-O-Akbar, Allah-O-Akbar...", and saying, "Lalaji, they might dishonour us!" (*Azadi*, p. 74). Since Padmini is old enough to have had a daughter of the marriageable age, her fears must have had grounds. In other words, Padmini knows that the Muslims had dishonoured Hindu womenfolk in the past. Hare Krishna's successful efforts to organize the Hindu boys with the result that "most youngmen of the street at his advice had joined the training in self-defence a few Hindu organizations were giving in the town" (*Azadi*, p. 71) also signify that the Hindus of West Punjab knew that the Government of Pakistan would not be able to protect them.

823.954
SH/CO

However, the narrator does succeed in bringing out that some members of the Muslim community did stand for communal harmony and did make efforts to make it prevail. The inference has been drawn from his showing that Chaudhari Barkat Ali is large hearted enough not to support any anti-Hindu disturbance. The narrator gives such details of Barkat Ali's thinking as:

> More than anything else, he regarded himself and his family as good Muslims because they believed in the unity of all religions. There was not a single ayat, a single verse, in the Quran which preached otherwise. God is great and Muhammad is his prophet. But the same God is the God of the Hindus as well, and if they preferred to worship him in another form that was their business. It was not for Barkat Ali to go round correcting the world. His job was to live the life God had given him in friendship and love. And the Hindu next door was as much his brother, more his brother, than an unknown Muslim living elsewhere.
>
> (*Azadi*, pp. 102-03)

Thus Barkat Ali is doubtlessly a votary of tolerance. The narrator's making Barkat Ali tell Kanshi Ram: "We have tried individually. . . . I have personally argued and argued. But it is of no avail; the poison has seeped in" (*Azadi*, p. 140) signifies that he was not the only man working for communal harmony. However, it also signifies that the efforts he and the people of his mind bore no fruit and the Muslim masses were acting in accordance with the instructions of the communal Muslim leaders.

The novelist gives a detailed description of riots and lets the reader see what he believes the riots were and what he believes the rioters did. At one place he narrates: "Unless you had another Muslim to vouch for you, you were rudely undressed by the mob and your vitals exposed to the curious eyes. 'Kill him—he is a kafir!' and the knife was driven at once through your stomach" (*Azadi*, p. 174). The passage is the embodiment of the suggestion that when there were riots the rioting Muslims killed every uncircumcised man they detected. At another place he writes: "In no case was the victim allowed to survive the attack and tell what happened; he was stabbed to *death*" (*Azadi*,

p.126). The suggestion is that efforts were being made to eliminate the Hindus. At still another place he writes: "More than murders, it was the fires that were frightening and demoralizing" (*Azadi*, p. 126). The suggestion is that fire was being used to demoralize and eliminate the Hindus. When he writes: "Trains had been as much victims of violence as individuals. Many of them were stopped on the way and the Hindus butchered" (*Azadi*, p. 141) it is being impressed upon that the rioters were not satisfied with the Hindus leaving Pakistan and were trying to remove them from the face of the earth itself. When he describes:

> In each village they passed, they found the remains of parties that had been attacked and butchered. In many cases, the dismembered human limbs and skeletons were still lying there, and the stench was intolerable. And they saw only bearded Muslim faces in these villages. The Hindu population had been completely driven out—or completely exterminated. Hindu and Sikh places of worship had obviously been defiled, because outside of them there were obscene words written in Urdu. ...In some villages Major Jang Bahadur Singh went round in his jeep shouting through a loud speaker, asking the Hindus and the Sikhs to come out. His words were greeted with silence from empty houses. In one small village of twenty houses, every single house had been destroyed and there was not a soul in sight.
>
> (*Azadi*, p. 283)

he gives a glimpse of the damage done by the riots to the Hindu population of West Punjab. What the passage signifies is that the communal Muslims of West Punjab did not let even one Hindu family stay on in their country when he narrates: "Most of the dead lay fully dressed. Only a few women lay with their breasts exposed, with a child next to the breast. Most of the children lay with their sides, their mouths open. Some women lay doubled up like bundles. While there were splashes of blood on the ground, and in a few cases on the tree trunks, the bodies themselves were relatively clean" (*Azadi*, p. 287) the suggestion is that the rioters were cruel enough not to spare even infants

and killed them. When he narrates:

> A number of abducted Hindu and Sikh women were in their custody. Many of the kidnapped women disappeared into private homes. A lone Muslim dragged a women away, and kept her for his own exclusive use or he took her with the consent of other Muslims, converted her to Islam, and got married to her. The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and in presence of large gatherings. The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations, until they were parcelled out to decrepit wrecks—the aged, the leftovers who couldn't find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife.
>
> (*Azadi*, p. 293)

it is obvious that he is suggesting that the rioters were depraved enough to dishonour the Hindu womenfolk, and to subject them to beastly atrocities. When he describes how naked women were paraded through streets and writes: "They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits.... They walked awkwardly, looking only at the ground. They were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears. Their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing. Their arms were free, but so badly had they been used, so wholly their spirits crushed, their morale shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands" (*Azadi*, p. 296), he suggests that these rioters were low-minded enough to derive pleasure out of their behaviour which should have put them to shame.

The novelist also records an episode in which Gangu Mull, a Hindu, embraces Islam and becomes Ghulam Mohammad. When this man is asked as to why he has embraced Islam, he says that by doing so he has escaped being killed and losing his property (*Azadi*, p. 269). What the episode suggests is that the rioters did no harm to the persons who adopted Islam. The implication is that the riots were a part of the policy of spreading Islam by force.

The novelist also gives the reader a peep into the behaviour of the victims of riots. First, in this tale there is none but Gangu Mull who embraces Islam. Secondly, Gangu Mull's embracing Islam puts his wife Amarvati to shame to the extent that when she meets him, the narrator says, "She looked crest-fallen, confirmed as she was in the knowledge that the piece of charcoal she had been trying to pass off as a jewel all these years was nothing but a piece of coal" (*Azadi*, p. 272). Thirdly, Sardar Niranjan Singh not only declares "Lose your head, if need be/ Don't lose your Sikh faith!"(*Azadi*, p. 246) and prefers immolating himself and embracing death to getting his hair cut and ceasing to remain a Sikh. All these three facts make it evident that according to Nahal the Hindus and Sikhs did make efforts to resist the Muslim efforts to spread Islam but their efforts were passive rather than active.

There are episodes in the novel suggesting that the local leaders of the Hindus and the Sikhs made no active efforts to nip the evil in the bud and adopted the attitude which can be summed up in the phrase 'No confrontation at this stage'. Here are a few illustrations which support the assertion.

First of all, Lala Kanshi Ram agrees to open the gate into the Hindu street for the Muslim procession even though a Municipal law permitted the Hindus "to close the side lanes and mohallas to general traffic at night" (*Azadi*, p. 79) and even if the procession had not gone through this street no harm would have been done either to the Muslim community or to the creation of Pakistan. *Secondly*, these leaders raise no voice of protest when some members of the last group in the procession "started throwing rocks and a number of glasspanes in a few houses were smashed" (*Azadi*, p. 89) even though those leading the procession had given an assurance to the Police Deputy Commissioner that in case the procession was allowed to go through the street there would be no violence. *Thirdly*, even the Police Deputy Commissioner says: "If it doesn't get any worse, we won't act" (*Azadi*, p. 89) even though glass panes of a house have been smashed under his very nose. *Fourthly*, no one, not even a Hindu, gathers courage to "point out the killers" when there have started occurring isolated cases of stabbing the Hindus (*Azadi*, p. 126).

These incidents in the novel signify that according to

Chaman Nahal the Hindus of West Punjab behaved timidly with the result that the evil went on enlarging itself to the extent that they had to face the scenes in which they found their womenfolk being dishonoured before their eyes. The novelist includes in the novel a scene in which Arun sees Sunanda being forcibly violated by Rahmat-Ullah Khan. The scene as Arun finds it is as follows : "She was lying on the ground on an improvised bed of hay, in the far corner. Her head was away from Arun and he saw her legs. Between her legs and on top of her, was lying a man" (*Azadi*, p. 307). Arun chooses to take up arms and kill Rahmat-Ullah Khan, at this stage. But there is no use of taking up arms when the worst has already been done. The episode signifies that according to Nahal if any Hindu became active in those days, he did so when it was too late. Chaman Nahal overtly signifies that the Hindus were timid when he makes some non-Hindu characters describe the Hindus as timid. For instance, he makes Nur remark to Arun: "You're a Hindu, after all—a Hindu. Too timid!" (*Azadi*, p. 97), and Niranjan Singhs remark to himself: "These Hindus were too weak. Always thinking of consequences. Guru Maharaj had given him strength for occasions such as this, and they wouldn't let him use it." (*Azadi*, p. 75).

The novelist also suggests that the Hindus of West Punjab did not act even with prudence. He does it when he narrates the story of the Hindu Police Deputy Commissioner who continues to depend for his safety on a Muslim police constable even when the communal poison has spread very extensively and gets killed by the latter. He does so also when he narrates that Lala Kanshi Ram does not move to the refugee camp until his shop has been looted and Chaudhari Barkat Ali comes to inform him that communal feelings have spread widely and the Muslim leaders pleading for communal harmony find themselves being unheeded to (*Azadi*, p. 140). He does it also when he shows Sunanda to have taken Rahmat-Ullah's words at their face value as she is reported to have told Arun: "In the jeep he swore he won't touch me. He said his men would take care of my children. He only wanted to be with me for some time. He would take me back to the children, he said" (*Azadi*, p. 313). Sunanda has been shown to be simple enough to trust the man who was abducting her and believed that the man would not dishonour her.

The narrator also evaluates the measures the British and the national governments of Pakistan took in order to enforce law and order. When Lala Kanshi Ram says to Bill Davidson: "We have been let down by you people" (*Azadi*, p. 147) he means to say that the British government did not take adequate measures to ensure the safety of the minorities. The novelist shows that when there are riots in Sialkot and the police people fail to protect the minorities, no steps are taken to employ the army to enforce law and order. When the novelist reports: "The independence was two weeks old. Sialkot was now a part of Pakistan: it was not the same town, they said, it was a different town! For the past many weeks, refugees had been moving into the camp each day. There was such an influx—of broken men and women and silent, wide-eyed children. Prabha Rani was certain those who had stayed behind the fifteenth of August had either been annihilated or converted to Islam; it was no city for the Hindus any longer" (*Azadi*, p. 172), he suggests that when Pakistan came into the hands of its national government, it made conditions for the Hindus worse.

The narrator also highlights the fact that the Muslim government officials were helping the rioters and were far from being impartial. He shows two government officials whole-heartedly helping the rioters: one is Inayat-Ullah Khan and the other is Rahmat-Ullah Khan. Inayat-Ullah Khan knows that there is a municipal law permitting citizens to close the gates into side-lanes and mohallas at night, but when he finds a Muslim procession in not being allowed to go through a Hindu mohalla he orders his subordinates: "Break open the gate!" (*Azadi*, p. 81). Rahmat-Ullah is a worse official as he goes to the extent of kidnapping and dishonouring the Hindu lady Sunanda (*Azadi*, p. 307) and, thus, himself turning a rioter. The fact has been overtly mentioned in the following words: "... they had their separate communal loyalties. These loyalties were openly and unashamedly expressed, and Lala Kanshi Ram heard innumerable accounts of how the minorities in East Punjab and West Punjab were slaughtered while men of the Boundary Force looked on" (*Azadi*, p. 211). When the narrator narrates: "the liaison officer Major Jang Bahadur Singh had left behind in Pasrur said the Pakistani authorities were creating obstructions on purpose. He warned the Major the convoy might be attacked by the local

Muslims. He had seen large concentrations of them in the city. He feared it was to help the mob that the Pakistani authorities were not letting them depart" (*Azadi*, p. 282), the fact has been reinforced through a report of an army officer.

However, the narrator has not reported what tactics and arguments rioters were employing in order to incite their followers to attack the Hindus. In other words the narrator has not been able to study the ways of the rioters from within and gives the reader only a spectator's view of the riots.

Even though the narrator tries to suggest that what was being done to the Hindus in West Punjab was being done to the Muslims in East Punjab, the tale is the embodiment of something of a different kind. The narrator, no doubt, succeeds in impressing upon the reader that the property of the Muslims had been damaged in East Punjab when he describes the Amritsar of the post-riots days in the following words: "The city looked as if it had been bombed from the air. Not a building in Hall Bazaar, the main thoroughfare of the city, stood intact; they were in total ruin. The roofs were gone, the window frames burned out, the walls collapsed. And this continued block after block, and bazaar after bazaar, charred and blackened walls, and heaps of rubbish of what must have been impressive, many-storyed buildings. These were the houses of the Muslims, who had now been driven out" (*Azadi*, p. 326), he also suggests that the Muslims on their way to Pakistan were slaughtered in East Punjab when he writes: "A train with hundreds of slaughtered Muslims had pulled in and they were cleaning up the platform. It was a train carrying Muslim refugees to Pakistan; it had been stopped at the signals outside of Amritsar, when the Muslims were massacred" (*Azadi*, p. 327), he also shows that naked Muslim women were paraded through the bazaar of Amritsar (*Azadi*, p. 327), and when he narrates: "Indian soldiers stood guard with machinne guns, but they were only a facade—like their counterparts in Pakistan. They had failed to protect the Muslims" (*Azadi*, p. 328), he says overtly that the Indian soldiers failed to protect the lives of Muslims in India just as the Pakistani soldiers had failed to protect the lives of the Hindus in Pakistan.

But a few other statements of the narrator suggest a few other things too: when in his description of post-riots Amritsar we come to the sentence "Many Hindu and Sikh houses were

damaged, too" (*Azadi*, p. 326), it becomes evident that the Muslims of East Punjab fought the Hindus back and destroyed their properties too, though there is nothing in the novel to signify that the Hindus of West Punjab hit back and destroyed the properties of the Muslims; and when Gangu Mull says that he has saved his life and property by embracing Islam (*Azadi*, p. 269), it becomes evident that those Hindus who refused to embrace Islam were deprived of their lives and properties—a fact that signifies that the Muslims of West Punjab employed force to make the Hindus embrace Islam, but there is nothing in the novel to suggest that even in a single case were the Muslims compelled to embrace Hinduism anywhere in India.

However, this should not be taken to mean that in Chaman Nahal's view almost everybody in those days was in a state of communal frenzy and that almost everybody was trying to humiliate every member of the other community. When he shows that when the naked Hindu women were being paraded through the streets of Narowal and most members of the mob were treating the show as a source of amusement, there was a Hakim who found the parade to be a sign of brutality by the members of his community. The narrator records the reaction of the Hakim in the following words: "The Hakim Sahib had covered his face with his hands and was rocking a little and he was saying, 'Allah, Allah, Allah!' And then he knelt on his knees, raised his arms and spread his hands before him as while saying namaaz. There was the look of infinite pain on his face. His thin frail eyelids rested on his eyes as if they would never open again. And moving his outstretched hands, like begging alms, he murmured in Punjabi 'Rabbul Alamin, forgive these cruel men. And oh, my Allah oh Rabbah, protect these women!" (*Azadi*, p. 298). The Hakim Sahib's praying to Allah makes it evident that he is neither an atheist nor a non-Muslim. His praying to Allah for forgiveness for the cruel members of the mob and protection for Hindu women signifies that he has not been overpowered by communal frenzy and his approach to the problem is that of a simple conscientious man even though he is a member of the Muslim community. What lies embodied in the episode is the novelist's suggestion that even among the Muslims there did exist people who did not approve of what the mobs were indulging in.

By making Kanshi Ram counterpart of the Hakim of Narowal and making him tell his wife: "I can't hate the Muslims any more... What I mean is, whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here" (*Azadi*, p. 338) the novelist seems to suggest that there existed simple conscientious people also among the Hindus and they disapproved of the atrocities the Hindus were heaping upon the Muslims of East Punjab.

What is of utmost significance is that the novelist gives a suggestion as to how these communal riots could have been averted. When he records Kanshi Ram's feelings in the following words:

> What the leaders of India were offering the people of Punjab was an enormous bluff, he felt. They had neither the power nor the intention of maintaining the minorities in their own homes; they had not the power of saving their lives. They should have devised means of mass migration to begin with, before rushing to partition. Now they should at least keep their mouths shut and not mislead the credulous people. Jinnah and Nehru were villains enough. This president of the Indian National Congress—and adjusting his spectacles, Lala Kanshi Ram, checked his name in the newspaper—Kripalani, was the worst offender. More than the others, it was he who was so loud about the minorities staying where they were.
>
> (*Azadi*, p. 211)

What he suggests is that the only way to protect the minorities at the time of partition was devising means of migration and then shifting the minorities to the areas where they were the majority community. Since Nehru and the President of the Congress Party had no say in the administration of Pakistan, it was beyond their capability to protect the Hindus in Pakistan and so it was a mistake on their part to advise the Hindus to stay on in Pakistan as it was not difficult for one gifted with imagination to foresee wide-spread communal riots in the wake of the Partition. A character's asking whether Pandit Nehru did not know his people (*Azadi*, p. 65) signifies that Pandit Nehru according to Chaman Nahal harboured illusions about his

countrymen and believed them to be much better than what they were.

Notes and References

1. Chaman Nahal, *Azadi* (Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1975), p. 13. All the subsequent quotations from the text refer to this edition of the novel.

7

Search for Alternatives in Margaret Atwood and Anita Desai

In Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* and Anita Desai's novels *Cry, the Peacock, Voices in the City*, and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* attempts have been made by some women characters to 'liberate' themselves from and to find alternatives to the institution of marriage. A study of the careers of these women characters enables one to arrive at the attitudes of these two women novelists towards the institution of marriage and the women's liberation movement.

In Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* it is Ainsley who chooses to seek an alternative to the institution of marriage when she resolves to become a mother without encumbering herself with a husband and rejects the way of the women who choose to marry, when she asserts that "[Women do not] give more thought to the characteristics they pass to their children [as, if they did] they wouldn't rush blindly into things."[1] She has in her mind a woman's role as a mother rather than one as a wife. She adds: "We know the human race is degenerating and it's all because people pass on their weak genes without thinking about it, and medical science means they aren't naturally selected out the way they used

to be" (*TEW*, p. 43). This observation of hers makes it evident that she recognizes the man's role in the reproductive activity, no doubt, but she regards him as a passive agent and assigns the role of the active agent to the women, as that must be that reason why she is holding women responsible for the degeneration of human race. Her opinion seems to have its roots in the Darwinian principle of natural selection and also in the biological theory of genes.

Her conditioning by her study of science has been such that ethical considerations do not figure in her thoughts at all and she does not find anything wrong in becoming a mother without getting married. She does not feel any pricks of conscience when in a mood of defiance she tells her landlady: "... I'd like you to know that I'm going to have a child too,..." (*TEW*, p. 224). In a society where one is permitted to have children only within conjugal walls, she has the boldness not only to say this but also to do this. All this signifies that she considers a husband a superfluity and has resolved to bring up her child entirely in accordance with her wishes and likes it to have before it only its mother as its guardian. This is also evidenced by the fact that she says: "No, I'm not going to get married. That's what's wrong with most children, they have too many parents. You can't say the sort of household Clara and Joe are running is an ideal situation for a child. Think of how confused their mother-image and their father-image will be; they're riddled with complexes already. And it's mostly because of the father" (*TEW*, pp. 39-40). This is her opinion about Joe who is a husband of a very co-operative nature and with whom Clara is very happy.

Ainsley also employs her flirtation with child psychology to justify her stand as she asserts that a child should have before it only the mother-image and not a father-image as according to her the father-image causes a damage to the mother-image (*TEW*, p. 40). The mistake that she commits is that she mistakes an opinion to be a gospel truth and does not tell herself that psychologists have been expressing opinions about human behaviours on the basis of a limited knowledge of facts with the result that many of such opinions are neglected by the psychologists of the next generation. For instance, there was a time when Freud's theory of sex was accepted almost universally, but when Alder and Jung came out with their findings Freud's assertions stood challenged.

But soon there comes a stage when Ainsley tries to persuade Leonard, whose child she is carrying in her womb, to marry her for the proper upbringing of the child and tells him: "... the point is of course I'm going to have the baby; but it should have the best circumstances, and it's your responsibility to provide it with a father. A father-image" (*TEW*, p. 213) and she seeks the help of even Marian to persuade Leonard to agree to marry her when she says to her: "You've got to make him listen to reason." (*TEW*, p. 213)

How keen she becomes to get a husband becomes clear when we come to the scene in which Leonard is trying to run away from her, even physically, and Ainsley is 'pulling at his sleeve' (*TEW*, p. 214) in an attempt to persuade him to marry her. This keenness of hers is indicated further by the fact that when she is jilted by Leonard she attempts to get somebody else and at last succeeds in making Fischer Smythe marry her. If she had been true to her earlier conviction she should not have done this. But since now she is as keen to have a husband as formerly she was adamant on not having one it is evident that now her views on marriage have changed and this change must have been brought about by some addition to her knowledge of child psychology. Margaret Atwood's making Ainsley realize the need of a father-image for a child's proper upbringing signifies her suggesting that there is no alternative to the institution of marriage so far as the family's function of properly bringing children is concerned.

Margaret Atwood's approach is different from that of Tennyson: in Tennyson's poem *The Princess* the institution of marriage is vindicated on the ground that when the emotion of love is aroused in a girl's heart, she cannot escape surrendering herself to the man with whom she falls in love;[2] but Margaret Atwood vindicates the institution of marriage on utilitarian grounds as in her novel, as has been pointed out, Ainsley chooses to marry because she considers it essential for a child to have the father-image before it for its proper upbringing. In other words, Margaret Atwood justifies the institution of marriage on a rational ground, rather than on an emotional one.

Moreover, Margaret Atwood considers the reasons why women tend to regard the institution of marriage to be inconvenient. She does it through Joe when he says: "... I think it's harder for any woman who's been to university. She gets the

idea she has a mind, her professors pay attention to what she has to say, they treat her like a thinking human being; when she gets married, her care gets invaded..." (*TEW*, p. 235). What he says here is tantamount to saying that the views of a woman are not paid adequate heed to by her husband with the result that a woman who has developed the capacity to think feels that her individuality is being suppressed on acount of her having become a wife.

In Anita Desai's novels we meet women protagonists who are not happy with their husbands and in them one can study the ways in which a married woman can try to 'liberate' herself. Some of the choices before a woman leading an unhappy married life are three: she may kill the husband; she may kill herself; and she may part company with him. Three women protagonists of Anita Desai choose these three ways in her novels, namely, *Cry, the Peacock, Voices in the City,* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

The protagonist of *Cry, the Peacock*! has heaps of complaints against her husband the two of which are that he has very little time to spare for her and her emotional needs and that he fails to appreciate her feelings. Her killing him by pushing him down the roof signifies her making an attempt to move out of the conjugal bonds. The narrator's report towards the end of the novel that this girl is insane signifies that the novelist regards her approach as anything but sane. In other words, the novelist seems to suggest that the approach that makes a woman 'liberate' herself from the bonds of marriage by killing her husband, is not sane.

The protagonist of the novel *Voices in the City* finds the behaviour of her mother-in-law and the other members of her family disgusting as she has not yet become a mother and the members of the family talk of getting her operated upon in order to detect and remove defects in her ovary. The girl's committing suicide in disgust signifies that she regards the institution of marriage as unbearable and that she resolves to move out of it. But since in order to move out of marriage she has to commit suicide, it is quite obvious that her quest for an alternative to marriage has failed. In other words, here too we have the suggestion that a quest for the alternative to the institution of marriage is fruitless.

So far as Sita, the protagonist of Anita Desai's novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is concerned, she takes steps much less

drastic than those taken by the protagonists of *Cry, the Peacock!* and *Voices in the City:* she goes out of the conjugal walls for a brief respite which restores normalcy to her. There are three distinct periods in her married life: during the first period she begins to harbour a dislike for conjugal walls and resolves to move away from her husband; during the second period she stays on the island and regains peace of mind; and during the third period she is back home to lead a normal life with her husband. Her going to the island symbolizes her making a quest for an alternative to marriage and her resolving to go back to live with her husband symbolizes her admitting that she has failed to find any alternative. In other words here too Anita Desai seems to be suggesting that there is no alternative to marriage.

Thus, both these women novelists have arrived at the same conclusion, viz., there is no alternative to the institution of marriage. However, there are differences between their treatments: Margaret Atwood presents the views of a girl who moves from an anti-marriage stance to a pro-marriage one, but Anita Desai studies the problems of married women and finds how their quests for alternatives to marriage prove futile.

However, since in the novels of both these novelists some women characters are unhappy with the conjugal walls as in Margaret Atwood's novel Ainsley remains anti-marriage for some time, and in those of Anita Desai they try to move out of conjugal bonds, obviously both the novelists are of the view that there is something wrong somewhere inside the conjugal walls and the female partner knows where the shoe pinches.

Notes and References

1. Margaret Atwood, *The Edible Woman* (Toronto: Maclelland and Stewart, 1987 [1969]), p. 43. The subsequent quotations from this novel (*TEW* for short) refer to this edition.
2. How Princess Ida is overcome by the emotion of love while nursing the prince has been described by Tennyson in the following lines spoken by the prince:

   She stoop'd; and out of langour leapt a cry,
   Leapt in a fiery passion from the brinks of death;
   And I believed that in the living world
   My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
   Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose

Glowing all over with noble shame; and all
Her falser self slipt from her like a robe
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mould that other, when she came
From barren deeps to conquer all with love.

[*The poems of Tennyson*, ed. Thomas Herbert Warren (London: Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 346]

8

Feminism in Nayantara Sahgal's Novels

Nayantara Sahgal's leanings towards feminism, even though mild, are quite marked in her novels *Storm in Chandigarh* and *A Situation in New Delhi.* The fact comes to light when one studies the undeserved ill-treatment a large number of her women characters in these novels have to undergo in the society, and tries to know why they are driven to committing suicide or to seeking divorce, or to undergoing torments defencelessly when it becomes inevitable.

The woman character who is driven to committing suicide is Madhu in *A Situation in New Delhi.*[1] The society that Nayantara creates in *A Situation in New Delhi* is one which fails to protect women even on the University campus in the capital city of the country as here Madhu a student of Delhi University, is raped in the Registrar's office. The boys who rape Madhu obviously regard Madhu only as an object of lust to be used at their disposal and have no regard for her feelings, will and self-respect. A society which produces such men and cannot punish them does not deserve to have women in it. One may raise an objection and argue that the whole society should not be

disparaged for what three boys do, because if this society has produced these three boys, it has also produced Usman Ali the Vice-Chancellor, who only expels the three guilty boys but also braves a physical assault and finally resigns as Vice-Chancellor in order to organize people against the guilty. Usman Ali, no doubt, fights the forces responsible for the rape of the girl, but the fact remains that his efforts bear little fruit and, at last, the girl realizes that even her brother "would be thankful when he was relieved of the responsibility of her" (*ASIND*, p. 156) and commits suicide in a state of helplessness by immolating herself. So it is obvious that this society has failed to create conditions in which women feel themselves safe and out of the reach of immoral men.

The women characters who have to opt to move out of the conjugal walls in order to escape illtreatment are Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh,* and Lydia and Nell in *A Situation in New Delhi.* Saroj's husband Inder ill-treats his wife chiefly for her having lost her virginity before her marriage as is evident from the following piece of conversation between him and his wife:

> "Well, why did you do it? That's what I keep coming back to. Why did you do it?" "I was fond of him," she said wearily, "and I was curious. Is that a crime?" "Good God. Didn't you have any inhibitions, any sense of modesty? Couldn't your curiosity wait till you got married?"[2]

But Inder himself too had lost his virginity long before his marriage, as the narrator reports: "There had been no such nightmare to contend with until his marriage. He (Inder) had been precocious and successful in sex, robustly collecting experience where he found it. Saroj had plundered that robustness, made a tortured image of the body's surrender, and nailed him to the inquisitor's chair" (*SIC*, p. 136). Since he had a lot of erotic experience before his marriage, there is no ethical justification behind his expecting his wife to have none. Saroj undergoes even a beating for this fault of hers, but Inder never punishes himself for his faults of identical nature.

Lydia and Nell, the two ladies who become Michael's wives successively in *A Situation in New Delhi* have to seek divorce because they find the husband's behaviour to be intolerable.

When Michael was Lydia's husband, "his drinking had blossomed into epic proportion" (*ASIND*, p. 12) and his behaviour towards her was far from satisfactory. Likewise, Nell began to feel soon after her marriage with him that he was only using her, as is evident from her remark: "You go on using [women] up like matches..." (*ASIND*, p. 12). Since in each of these cases it is the husband who is at fault, it can be safely inferred that the novelist lays blame for the failure of each of these marriages at the husband's door and regards the wife as a victim of the male domination in society.

The woman character who has to undergo torments defencelessly because she finds her husband incorrigible is Nadira, the wife of Usman Ali. Nadira feels herself to have been wronged by her husband, as she has come to know that he is in love with Devi, even though she herself has not shown even one single symptom of frailty, as the narrator reports: "Nadira, looking on, wondered how he could, without going near a woman, *this* woman, look as if he possessed her utterly, a latent sensuality about even this ordinary leave-taking. It was the intangibles in her life with Usman that tormented her, nothing so explicable as adultery, though that was one of her demons too" (*ASIND*, pp. 80-81). Nadira is faithful to her husband in spite of the fact that Usman Ali married late as a result of which there is a wide gap between their ages. Nadira is hurt to find that her husband is availing himself of more freedom than a married man has a right to avail himself by making love to Devi. There is nothing unnatural or extraordinary in a wife's desiring her husband to be exclusively hers as there is nothing unnatural in a husband's desiring his wife to be exclusively his. Inevitably, he has hurt Nadira very deeply, as is evident from the following exchange of remarks between them :

> 'Everyone has a past', said Usman, 'and the past has a way of continuing into the present. We can't at some point say it's over and done with. Bits of it linger and they should. It's part of the perfume of life.'
>
> 'I gave up everything when I married you,' said Nadira.
>
> 'That you did not. You brought it all with you, your

> attitudes, your prejudices. We all do.' Nadira drew a hand across her eyes, 'Very well Usman. What I mean is her. As long as our life was more or less normal I could put up with her. But now I don't know what to expect.' (*ASIND*. p. 136)

Nadira's compelling Usman to cease to be in love with Devi is not at all unjustifiable. Usman's insisting on letting his past continue in the present has no moral or social justification behind it and his wife has every reason to resent and call him ruthless.

The way Nadira suffers torments defencelessly is, in Mrs. Sahgal's opinion, typical of womankind, as her narrator in the novel reports: "(Nadira) turned around, her eyes with their look of more than childlike defencelessness, a creature of slaughter and sacrifice. Either that or a prized possession. In any case, womankind, not woman" (*ASIND*, p. 82) and provides an aperture for the reader to peep into Mrs. Sahgal's mind and read there that for her womenfolk have been suffering torments defencelessly at the hands of menfolk just as Nadira has been at the hands of Usman Ali.

Secondly, Mrs. Sahgal creates a number of feminists in her novels and makes them give appealing arguments in support of women's claims to be regarded as individuals rather than as mere dependents. Such characters include men like Vishal Dubey in *Storm in Chandigarh* and Rishad in *A Situation in New Delhi*, and women characters like Tazi and Reba again in *A Situation in New Delhi:* Vishal Dubey would like women not to remain subdued and to express themselves. "[Dubey] thought of his own country-women as the subdued sex, creatures not yet emerged from the chrysalis, for whom the adventure of self-expression had not even begun. Whatever womanhood had once meant in India had been lost in the mists of antiquity. In its place these had long been a figure of humility, neck bent/eyes downcast, living flesh consigned to oblivion" (*SIC*, p. 191). Vishal resents the fact that a woman is not regarded as an individual, as he reflects, "Women were not a subject for discussion. They were wives, daughters, mothers. They belonged to their men by contract or by blood. Their sphere was sexual and their job procreation. They were dependents, not

individuals" (*SIC*, p. 191). Dubey holds that a woman is punished for the faults which are considered tolerable if a man commits them: "A Woman was not entitled to a past, not entitled to human hunger, human passion, or even human error. In the fires and desolations of living she ranked as not quite human" (*SIC*, p. 192). These are the arguments of a feminist voicing his protest against the dominance of male human beings in the society.

Rishad, the other feminist, would like a girl to marry a boy of her choice, and regards an arranged marriage as a case of "organized rape" (*ASCIND*, p. 25). When Rishad comes to know that Pinky is going to be given in marriage to a boy whom she has never met, he refuses even to attend the marriage and expresses his resentment. If he had had his way, he would have freed Pinky from the need of her seeking her mother's permission or, for that matter, anybody's permission to go out. His argument that a girl be allowed to marry a boy of her choice is quite appealing. Tazi and Reba voice women's resentment at being subjected to the humiliation of undergoing close supervision: they would like to get married early so that they escape prying supervision. The fact becomes evident when we read the narrator's report: "Tazi and Reba kept repeating soon [Pinky]'d be living her own life away from prying supervision...." (*ASIND*, p. 148).

However, these assertions should not be taken to mean that Nayantara Sahgal is a champion of women's complete liberation and likes women to have nothing to do with men. If her women characters, who are free from the dominance of men, had exercised adequate restraints over themselves and had been shown leading spotless lives, she could have been regarded as a champion of women's complete liberation. But the fact remains that her women characters, who are free from the dominance of men, do not exercise adequate self-restraint and do not lead blameless lives. We can take the case of Devi, for instance: even though she is free from the dominance of a husband as she is a widow, she is in love with two men, namely, Usman Ali and Michael.

The second reason why Nayantara Sahgal cannot be regarded as a champion of women's liberation is that she admits the fact that a woman needs a husband biologically. The fact

comes to light when we study the way Nadira reconciles herself to her lot and refrains from rising in rebellion against her husband even though she finds him not at all inclined to ceasing to be in love with Devi. Thirdly, it is also noticeable that neither Tazi nor Reba has a desire to remain single, nor either of them is desirous of getting married as early as possible so that they may escape "prying supervision". If Nayantara Sahgal had been an aggressive feminist, at least some of her feminist women characters must have resolved to remain single as Tennyson's Princess at the early stage does. Fourthly, it is worth-noticing that the feminist male character, Rishad, when he enters Dr. Jaipal's house, cuts with his scissors the dresses of late Mrs. Jaipal—a woman—rather than those of a cruel husband, and loses his life, when a bomb planted by one of his friends explodes, before doing anything worthwhile. If Mrs. Sahgal had been strongly in sympathy with him, this feminist of hers would not have done anything against a woman and would have met a better fate. Fifthly, the arguments some of her champions of women's liberation give in support of liberation are too poor to deserve serious consideration. For instance, Tazi and Reba resent their elders' not letting them smoke, drink, wear tight dresses, come back home late at night and pose for advertisements.

If these girls had any knowledge of medical science, they would have realized that it was in their own interest not to smoke, drink and wear tight dresses. And if they had any knowledge of the conditions prevailing in their society, they would have been aware of the fact that it was prudent to come back home early in the evening.

Notes and References

1. Nayantara Sahgal, *A Situation in New Delhi* (New Delhi: Himalaya Books, 1977), p. 30. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*ASIND*, for short) refer to this edition.
2. Nayantara Sahgal, *Storm in Chandigarh* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 131. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*SIC*, for short) refer to this edition.

9

The Contribution of Women to the Development of the Indian English Novel

Though Indian English novel[1] remained male-dominated for quite some time, as all the major English novelists in the pre-Independence period including the three greats, namely, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand came from the male section of the society, yet in the post-Independence period there have appeared on the horizon of Indian English novels a number of women writers who have made a significant contribution in the field and have definitely enriched it a great deal. They include Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherji, Kamla Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Gita Mehta, Kusum Ansal, and Arundhati Roy.

The problem of adjustment in the husband's home has been the most widely treated problem in the novels written by Indian women novelists. This has been treated, for instance, by Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande. Some of these writers seem to be suggesting that wives be given more rights and be not treated as inferior to their husbands, while others seem to be suggesting that wives should have a more positive outlook than the one they have and should relinquish the negative one.

Nayantara Sahgal, for instance, seems to be championing the cause of according equality to women. The view embodied in her novels is that the same code of morality be applied to both men and women. In her novels like *Storm in Chandigarh*, Nayantara Sahgal takes up for treatment the theme of estrangement in marriages and evinces how marriages break over the issues of pre-marital and extra-marital sex-relations. What lies embodied in the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* is, as Shyam Asnani observes that "Mere living together under the same roof, only the accumulating of a life-time's living habits, without any real bond of intimacies in spite of sex and children, the human substance between them dwindling is nothing but the mockery of marriage. True living lies in understanding each other, in mutual respect and trust, honesty and freedom, without a thought of dominance."[2] Nayantara Sahgal raises a voice of protest against the practice of having one standard of morality for men and another for women. In the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* where she portrays Inder who believes in two codes of morality, one for himself and another for his wife as even though he himself is not faithful to his wife Saroj, he resents her having lost her virginity before her marriage.[3] What has been rejected here is the view that a wife is her husband's property and has no individuality outside of that system."[4]

Though Anita Desai too takes up the problem of a wife's adjustment in her husband's home, her approach is different from that of Nayantara Sahgal. The view embodied in her novels is that the solution of the problem lies not in constantly finding faults with the husband's behaviour but in having a positive attitude. In her novels *Cry, the Peacock!*, *Voices in the City*, and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Anita Desai takes up for treatment the problems causing estrangements in families as in each one of them the wife is unhappy with her husband. For example, the protagonist in *Cry, the Peacock!* has heaps of complaints against her husband though he is quite good and considerate to her and does his professional work with devotion. In none of these novels is the husband cruel, harsh, or unsympathetic, not to speak of being dictatorial or dominating. Each of the wife-protagonists, including Monisha, Maya, and Sita, feels that she is not getting as much emotional attachment as she is entitled to have, with the result that the protagonist of *Cry,*

the Peacock! kills her husband, the protagonist of *Voices in the City* kills herself, and Sita, the protagonist in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* leaves her husband's home to spend the summer on Manori island (though she comes back after some time to rejoin him). The suggestion embodied in the novels is that a wife's demanding too much attention and affection is likely to cause estrangement in the family and that the moment a wife changes her outlook to the positive side, as Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* does, the very cause of estrangement disappears and the home becomes happy. There is no change in the husband in the novel and up to the end of the novel he remains as he was, yet Sita comes back to live with him happily. This means that the change comes in Sita's thinking and that it is this change that removes the cause of maladjustment and that is what Anita Desai stands for. Since in Anita Desai's novels there is no attempt to regard exclusively male partners as responsible for the miseries of the female partners, hers is not the feminist approach. She seems to be aware of the fact that all husbands are not inconsiderate and hard-hearted.

In the novels of Shashi Despande, who, in the words of A.K. Awasthi, "catches on the subtle psychological complexity of the individual mind",[5] it is the individualistic outlook of women that has been attacked. What has been upheld in her novels is the view that a woman, even when she is talented and highly educated, has to realize social responsibilities and think *also* of those who are around her, rather than lead an insular existence. In her novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* the protagonist Saru realizes that she has been highly individualistic and has lost her brother, her mother, and her husband's manhood on account of this outlook of hers as she contemplates: "My brother died because I turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood."[6] She hated her mother, she recollects because the latter did not allow her as much freedom as she (Saru) liked to avail herself of, as is evidenced by the following exchange of remarks between her mother and herself:

> Don't go out in the sun. You'll get even darker.
> Who cares?
> We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.

I don't want to get married.
Will you live with us all your life?
Why not?
You can't. (*DHNT.*, p. 40)

She resents her mother's favouring her (Saru's) brother and has developed a feeling of envy towards him as is evident from the following piece of conversation between her mother and her:

And Dhruva?
He's different. He is a boy. (*DHNT.*, p. 40)

And her husband's spirits were dampened by her words in the following piece of conversation:

We don't have to worry about loan any more.
Why?
His face both puzzled and relieved.
Booze's giving me money.
All of it? (*DHNT.*, p. 79)

Saru has reached the state of enlightenment when she says to her father. "Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait, I'll be back as soon as I can" (*DHNT.*, p. 202), as this remark of hers signifies that she has realized her duties as a wife and, thus, has become not only aware of but also heedful to her domestic duties. This signifies that Deshpande's is not an aggressive feminist attitude and that it is conciliatory and not partisan towards women. The fact signifies that in spite of her being a woman she is not to be regarded as a feminist.

A.K. Awasthi finds self-assessment to be the main concern in Shashi Deshpande's novels as he asserts: "The chief concern in Shashi Deshpande's novels is evidently self-assessment, which she presents through naturalistic technique—there is fear to face oneself; there is no reason to fear oneself, i.e., the want to [*SIC*] moral courage and possible loss of happiness even though illusory; and there is a way to elude this fear and gain one's own self, that fear does not exist at all. In all the three novels she has written so far, namely, *If I Die Today* (1982) *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), and *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983) she is in search of meaning

and purpose of life in relation to the individual's existence."[7] But the protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* has been made to realize, as has already been pointed out, that it was her individualistic outlook that made her lose her brother, mother and her husband's manhood, and that it is faulty. All this signifies that Shashi Despande's chief concern is social responsibility. The fact is corroborated when one turns to her novel *Come Up and Be Dead* as in this novel it is the ambition to have pleasure in life irrespective of morality that takes a man to the path of crime, and that the implication is that it is not desirable for one to desire happiness at the cost of one's social responsibilities.

These women novelists also express their views about various contemporary social practices. For instance the practice of marrying the second time has been taken up for treatment by a number of them. There are a large number of literary works including Shakespeare's drama *Hamlet* and Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield* in which sons have to suffer on account of the mother's marrying the second time. In Kusum Ansal's novels *Travelling with a Sunbeam* the problem has been looked upon from a feminist's point of view, as here she narrates how a girl child has to suffer and undergo hardships because her father, who is a widower, chooses to marry the second time, like most widowers in India. This novel is an embodiment of the novelist's rejection of the practice of a widower's marrying the second time as Surekha, who is sent to live with her father's sister after her father's second marriage so that her father's new family set-up may not be ruffled, has to undergo emotional hardships. In the words of R.P. Tewari, "No echo of Surekha's anguished cry is supposed to reach the vestibule of her father's new family set-up, lest it should ruffle its peace and happiness. Bereaved of her mother and forsaken by her father Surekha embarks upon an uncertain voyage. She is led by an irony of fate into a stagnant social lagoon cut off from the main stream."[8] The suggestion is that the second marriage of a widower causes as many sufferings to the children as the second marriage of a widow.

The theme of East-West encounter has been treated by a number of Indian women writers including Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Jhabvala, Bharati Mukherjee, Nayantara Sahgal and Gita Mehta. And various dimensions of the problem find projection in their works.

Kamla Markandaya treats the problems Indian immigrants are facing in the Western countries. For instance, in her novel *The Nowhere Man*, we have a family of the Indian origin living in Britain. Even though Srinivas, the protagonist in the novel, loves the land he has chosen to stay in and tries to have smooth relations with the people of this land, yet he finds he is regarded as an outsider, is looked upon as a black man and is warned with writings like 'Blacks go home' with the result that he is compelled to contemplate: "It was my mistake to imagine that I am in England. The people will not allow it except physically... I am to be driven outside, which is the way they want it. An outsider in England. In actual fact I am, of course, an Indian... I cannot pretend....Why should I? My wife never did. She had gone about in fact uncompromised to the day of her death in nine yards of sari and sandals irredeemably Indian in style and cut."[9]

Bharati Mukherjee too takes up for treatment the problem of adjustment that Indians living in the West have to face. In her novel *Wife*, Amit Dasgupta and his wife Dimple face the problem in their own ways, as Amit devotes himself to money-making, and Dimple, for whom coming to America is a dream come true, finds it difficult to walk down the streets in pants and sweaters, cannot forget Durga Puja when the month of October comes[10] and feels her own body to be "curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt" (*Wife*, p. 117). Shyam Asnani and Deepika Rajpal are right in their analysis of her situation when they assert: "Though married to an uneducated and illiterate husband, Dimple is not able to strike a balance between the two juxtaposed worlds: the one she left behind and the other she comes to live in."[11]

In Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* the East-West encounter takes a different form: here an innocent Westerner, who has come to India in search of a Guru who can enable one to attain spiritual enlightenment, gets cheated by a hypocrite who pretends to be a teacher of spiritual affairs. The Word 'Karma Cola' is analogous to the word 'Coca Cola' and the suggestion embodied in the novel is that if the West sells Coca Cola to India, Indians have their theory of *Karma* to sell to the West in return, and if the Westerners exploit and cheat the Indians, all Indians are not saints.

The East-West encounter in India has been taken up for

treatment in Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's fiction too and the view suggested therein is that the Westerners continue to be regarded as outsiders in India even when they try to become members of the Indian society. In her novel *Esmond in India* (1958), for example, Esmond's quest for identity in India seems to be a failure.

In some of these novels opinions have been expressed about the contemporary political issues and the political scenario of the country. Several novels of Nayantara Sahgal, for example, belong to this category. One may or may not like the stands taken therein, the fact remains that they embody views which have been advanced by people and which have brought about political changes in the country. Nayantara Sahgal's novel *The Time of Morning* brings out the confusion and turmoil which the newly acquired Independence of India brought along with it. The Partition of India, election campaigns, clashes between members of the ruling political party resulting in splits, conflicting political ambitions of the political leaders, and agitations over issues like the official language of a state constitute the main parts of the novel. Her novel *Storm in Chandigarh* (1970) mirrors the uneasy political situation prevailing in Chandigarh and enables the reader to see how the making of the new state of Haryana and its sharing the capital Chandigarh with Punjab gave rise to troubles over such issues as the boundary, and water and electric supply. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) is a novel about the corruption rampant in the country and the confusion prevailing everywhere after the death of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. And *Rich Like Us* (1983) is a novel depicting the conditions which prevailed in India when the state of Emergency was proclaimed during the reign of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The period of Emergency has been depicted here as a period when opportunists and sycophants were flourishing.

Notes and References

1. The term Indian English novel is being used here in the sense of the novels written by persons who are Indians, either by birth or by the choice of residence.
2. Shyam M. Asnani, "The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal", *Indian*

Literature, January-June 1973, p. 57.

3. The assertion is comparable to the one made by A. Carter in her 'Introduction' to her book *Wayward Girls*: "...morality as regards women has nothing to do with ethics: it means sexual morality and nothing but sexual morality. To be a wayward girl usually has something to do with pre-marital sex; to be a wicked woman has something to do with adultery. This means it is far easier for a woman to lead blameless life than it is for a man; all she has to do is to avoid sexual intercourse like the plague. What hypocrisy!" (*Wayward Girls and Wicked Women: An Anthology of Stories* [London: Virgo, 1986], p. x).
4. While asserting that there are various branches of the feminist thought Francis Bonner and Lizbeth Godman observe in their article "Introduction: On imagining Women": "There is not one feminism, but rather several different branches of feminist thought. The tripartite division into liberal, radical and socialist feminisms no longer accurately describe the great diversity of positions. One basis on which feminist perspectives can be distinguished is the degree to which they are described as 'essentialist'. 'Essentialism' is simplistically characterized by the argument that 'women are born not made', that 'womanhood' is innate rather than socially constructed. 'Yet few feminists deny the socio-cultural construction of gender' (*Imagining Women: Cultural Representations and Gender* eds. Frances Bonner, Lizbeth F. Goodman, Richard Allen, Linda James, and Catherine King [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992], p. 2).
5. A.K. Awasthi, 'The Quest of Identity in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande', *Quest of Identity in Indian English Writing: Fiction* ed. R.S. Pathak (Delhi: Bahri, 1992), p. 95.
6. Shashi Deshpande, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1980), p. 198. All the subsequent quotations from the novel (*DHNT* for short) refer to this edition.
7. A.K. Awasthi, 'The Novels of Shashi Deshpande', *Quest for Identity in Indian English Writing: Fiction, op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.
8. R.P. Tewari, '*Travelling with a Sunbeam*: The Quest for Love and Identity', *Quest for Identity In Indian Writing*: *Fiction op. cit.*, p. 157.
9. Kamla Markandaya, *The Nowhere Man* (Delhi: Sangam Paperbacks, 1973), pp. 231-32.
10. Bharati Mukherjee, *Wife* (Delhi: Sterling Paperbacks, 1976), p. 114.
11. Shyam Asnani and Deepika Rajpal, "Identity Crisis in *The Nowhere Man* and *Wife*", *Quest for Identity in Indian English Writing*: *Fiction op. cit.*, p. 45.

10

Post-Independence Political Issues in Indian English Novels

A large number of Indian English novels written in the post-Independence period have in them treatment of various political issues. Some of them are the communal riots, the Chinese aggression, disputes between India and Pakistan, differences between the political parties of the country, and the rise of parochial tendencies. For instance, the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1947 have been treated in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Chaman Nahar's *Azadi*, and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan;* the Hindu-Sikh riots have been treated in Khushwant Singh's *Delhi;* the Chinese aggression has been treated by Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novel *Shadow from Ladakh;* the disputes between India and Pakistan have been created by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children;* the fight between the political parties of the country leading to the declaration of Emergency has been treated in Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and Arun Joshi's *The City and the River;* and the rise of parochial tendencies, has been treated in Nayantara Sahagal's *Storm in Chandigarh.*

So far as the novels treating the communal riots of 1947 are concerned, each of them has its own significance as in each

of them a distinct stand has been taken and a distinct perspective has been embodied. When Manohar Malgonkar writes in his novel *A Bend in the Ganges:* The entire land was being sputtered by the blood of its citizens, blistered and disfigured with the fires of religious hatred; its roads were glutted with enough dead bodies to satisfy the ghouls of a major war"[1] he seems to be suggesting that the problem created by religious hatred had taken a very serious form in 1947. The narrator narrates that the Hindus and the Muslims who had been jointly fighting the British began to fight each other all of a sudden and the protagonist is taken by surprise. The novelist seems to be suggesting that communal hatred was injected into the minds of Indians in order to disrupt the country's struggle for freedom.

The view that lies embodied in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* is that the British let the minorities down when they resolved to partition the country on communal ground as partitioning a country on this ground implies withdrawing the assurance of security given to the minority and leaving the members of the minority community at the mercy of the majority community. Chaman Nahal is fully conscious of the fact that in both the communities there existed upholders of communal harmony like Kanshi Ram, Chaudhary Barkat Ali and the Hakim Sahib, but what also lies embodied in the novel is the view that when the country was being partitioned on communal ground the rulers must have recognized the reality of the situation and must have accepted the fact that at least at that juncture communal harmony had ceased to prevail in the country and that what was urgently needed in order to ensure safety to the members of the minority community was shifting them to the areas where the members of that community were in majority. However, he does not consider the point how far it was viable.

If Chaman Nahal treats in his novel the situation prevailing in Pakistan, Khushwant Singh treats in *Train to Pakistan* the situation prevailing in India. The views the novelist seems to have embodied in the novel are that communal riots were often engineered by outsiders even in the village where there was no communal tension at all, that they did not hesitate in using criminals against the innocent, and that there also existed people who frustrated the plans of the trouble-makers and helped people

go safe to the places of safety. Just as in either of the two novels *A Bend in the Ganges* and *Azadi* a Hindu boy is in love with a Muslim girl, here too a Sikh boy is in love with a Muslim girl Khushwant Singh takes up the Hindu-Muslim tension for treatment in his novel *Delhi* too and seems to be suggesting that the policies adopted by rulers like Aurangzeb are largely responsible for them.

In *Delhi* Khushwant Singh takes up the Hindu-Sikh riots of 1984 for treatment though he ignores the incidents which took place in Punjab under the leadership of Bhindranwala. Khushwant Singh traces the history of the city of Delhi and comes to its then existing human geography. He has full sympathies with the victims of the riots.

Threats posed to the Independence of the country also have been treated in several novels. One of them is Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* in which a threat to India's independence has been posed by the Chinese aggression. Likewise, the problems caused to the country by changing foreign relations have been brought to light in Nayantara Sahagal's novel *The Day in Shadow* (1971).

In Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* we have the treatment of the Sino-Indian border dispute of the early sixties. The narrator here talks of "[t] he creeping, probing fingers of China, reaching out of Sinkiang to Indian territory"[3] and poses the question : Would [India's] freedom ever be in peril? What if hostile hands struck out from beyond the silence—from Sinkiang?" (*SL*, p. 24). The dispute, as everybody knows, had taken a very serious form in 1962 when India had been defeated by China in North-East Frontier Agency (now known as Arunachal Pradesh) and had given a severe blow to Nehru's reputation as a statesman. Bhattacharya rejects the Chinese stand on the border dispute when he asserts: "In slow stages the Chinese had surreptitiously annexed sixteen thousand square miles of terrtory that had been an integral part of India. Their claims were mounting still; they wanted fifty thousand square miles at the eastern end of the frontiers, south of the so-called McMahon Line, a demarcation that had simply formalized the traditional and customary boundary accepted over the ages" (*SL*, p. 79).

The novelist also presents the ways how this threat to the freedom of India from China can be encountered; the first of them is the Gandhian way of non-violence resistance and the other is

the Nehruvian or the Western way of industrialization and large acale production.

The Western approach has been summed up in the following words of Bhashkar Roy: "Steel means economic progress, Machine tools, tractors, big Industrial plants, locomotives, Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking, Development plus defense—a compulsion of our current history" (*SL*, p. 27). And the Gandhian way has been embodied in Satyajit's taking a Peace Mission to Ladakh, as Satyajit holds: "—a world moral force will bestride Ladakh. No brute force can prevail against that power, the roused conscience of man. And at the end of it all. . .two great Asian peoples will find back their lost heritage of friendship. The brief aberration will be forgotten" (*SL*, pp. 104-05).

The novels in which the fights between political parties and the practices of statesmen wielding power have been highlighted include Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and Arun Joshi's *The City and the River* (1990). In *The Great Indian Novel* the measures antagonistic to the flourishing of democracy have been found fault with. Here the incidents of the contemporary period have been likened to those narrated in the epic *Mahabharata*. The novelist seems to be suggesting that declaring Emergency was as bad a measure as Duryodhana's attempt to get Draupadi stripped in the court.

The *City and the River* is the novel in which "Arun Joshi presents the malpractices in which people wielding political power indulge and the ways in which people respond to them."[3] What Arun Joshi wants to say through the novel can be summed up in the following words: "The novel embodies the view that one who misuses political power cannot escape undergoing punishment for it even if one succeeds in eliminating all one's opponents. In the novel punishment comes to the offender from nature. Even though none of the men rising against the Grand Master succeeds in removing him, as the Headman is blinded and, later, deserted by her own followers, Bhoma's telling people that the king is naked comes to a stop when he comes to stay with the Grand-father and, later on, dies when the son demolishes the Grand-father's house in an attempt to arrest him, the Professor dies as a result of his fast unto death in prison, and Shailaja's

brother immolates himself, there comes in the river a flood in the face of which the king finds himself helpless." Arun Joshi is pondering over the question as to what kind of political system is safe for the people. "Since the novelist is exposing how a democratic set-up can be misused and replaced by dictatorship, it is evident that he stands for neither dictatorship nor democracy. The course of incidents included in the novel signifies that the novelist likes to have a political system in which the ruler does not oppress people, as when the Professor is lying on his deathbed he has a hope : "There will be no Grand Masters. There will be a new world, a new race of men will be born. Besides this none of the virtuous characters in the novel says categorically as to what kind of political system is better than the democratic system. That signifies that Arun Joshi does not suggest any alternative political system but wishes to have one in which there is no oppression."[6]

Anant Gopal Sheorey's novel *Dusk Before Dawn* is the embodiment of the view that political power turns an idealist into a corrupt, power-hungry and greedy tactician who does not hesitate in manoeuvring things to realize selfish ends. So is the case with Nayantara Sahagal's novel *This Time of Morning* (1965) in which the corrupt state of affairs prevalling in the post-Independence India has been highlighted. Nayantara Sahagal too in her novel *Rich Like Us* (1985) draws attention to the fact that it was a mistake to declare Emergency in the country in 1975. Likewise, her novel *A Situation in Delhi* (1979) is an embodiment of the view that there have appeared on the political horizon of India self-centred seat-seekers.

The threat posed by narrow linguistic, regional and such other parochial considerations has been treated in novels like Nayantara Sahagal's *Storm in Chandigarh* (1965) in which the plot centres round the theme of the bifurcation of the state of Punjab on linguistic grounds.

Notes and References

1. Manohar Malgaonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1964), p. 332.
2. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (London: Allen, 1967, p. 2.) All the subsequent quotations from *Shadow from Ladakh* (*SL* for

short) refer to this edition of the novel.

3. Brahma Dutta Sharma, *The City and the River as a Political Novel"*, *The Novel of Arun Joshi* ed. R.K. Dhawan (Delhi: Prestige, 1992), p. 241.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-51.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-52.

11

Philosophical Reverberations in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*

In an interview with Sujata Mathai[1] Arun Joshi reveals that he was influenced both by Camus and other existential writers on the one hand and by Gandhi and the *Bhagvadgita* on the other. Besides, these influences the influence of evolutionary philosophers can also be traced in his writings. It is not only the attributes of different philosophies that are present as an undercurrent in Joshi's fiction but the characters too sometimes discuss various philosophies and philosophers. For example, the protagonist of *The Foreigner* quotes certain verses from the *Bhagvadgita* and tries to practise the principle of detachment preached therein. Similarly, the characters in *The Last Labyrinth* discuss many philosophers including evolutionists like Darwin and Lord Krishna: "May be Krishna begins where Darwin left off."[2]

Despite Arun Joshi's admittance in one of his interviews: "Sartre I did not understand clearly or like as for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood anything except odd statements",[3] there are instances and descriptions in *The Foreigner* which make the novel read as an existential quest to find a meaning in the absurdity of life.

The protagonist of the novel Sindi Oberoi goes on hopping from one land to another because he finds his life meaningless and rootless. Born of an English mother and Indian father in Kenya, he finds his life a burden after the death of his parents. So he contemplates "suicide".

To relieve himself of this burden, he reached London but was "very soon tired of the class-room lectures"[4] and continued his search for "meaning of his life". (p. 167) It is in this effort that he goes to Soho and washes even dishes; this does not lead him anywhere. In a Scotland village he discusses his problems with a Catholic priest, who does not give him any solution. Though the books on philosophy, which he reads during his three months sojourn there, give him some light as he comes across some reality (pp. 170-71) yet that is not ultimate and permanent (*see infra*). There is no substantial change in his attitude to life that he is living on the superficial level because he does not belong anywhere. He realizes the vanity of his life at the young age of twenty-five. He gives expression to his feelings thus:

> And yet all shores are alien when you don't belong anywhere. Twenty-fifth christmas on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement: a ten stone body that had to be fed four times a day, twenty-eight times a week. This was the sum of a life time striving. (p. 91)

Thus, the problem that Sindi is facing is that of finding a meaning in the absurdity around him. Since he considers this life to be full of illusions, he is unable to fix up his roots anywhere in the world. His problems multiply particularly when he feels insecure after his uncle's death. Thus, Sindi's is a psychic case. For an insecure man, everybody around him is an enemy and everything is purposeless. He ruminates on the purposelessness of his life:

> I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose unless you could call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner

> in America. But then what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter? It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreigness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went. (p. 61)

Sindi' case in *The Foreigner* is not a study of an individual but 'the whole lot of mankind' suffering from the modern malaise of cultural estrangement, social isolation and self-estrangement. In a bid to find solace within and without, Sindi moves from person to person, place to place and country to country, because he feels that individuals and places have their own limitations in a given set of circumstances and he hopes to meet individuals and places which will give his suffering soul solace. Because of his hopping nature he is not able to cultivate a culture[5] or even become a part of it. He confesses to Mr. Khemka that he has no sense of morality and he does not belong to any culture. Though, he realizes the vanity of his thinking when he says:

> "Like many of my breed, I believed erroneously that I could escape from a part of myself by hopping from one land to another" (p. 177), yet this realization is too late for his efforts to belong somewhere, or bear any fruit. He himself is conscious of the fact: "In truth it had only been a change of theatre from America : the show had remained unchanged. I had met new people with new vanities. They merely had different ways of squeezing happiness out of the mad world. *And they suffered differently*" (p. 207, emphasis added).

In order to get relief from pain and get the answer to some perennial questions, Sindi takes refuge in Occidental and Oriental philosophies. After the death of his parents he goes to Scotland and works in a library in a small village for three months. There he not only discusses things with a catholic priest who initially is interested in only converting him but discusses religion, God and mysticism later on (p. 170). Besides the discussions Sindi did a lot of reading there but the reader is not told what that is about. However, the conclusion that Sindi reaches is that of a Vedantin: "All love whether of things, or person, or oneself was illusion and all pain sprang up from illusion. Love begot greed

and attachment, and it led to possession." (p. 171)

The first part of the *jnana* attained by Sindi is a part dealt with in *The Bhagvadgita*. While Arjuna saw his relatives standing in the battlefield ready to fight, he suffered from *Moha* and as a result attachment and pain:

> My limbs quail, my mouth goes dry, my body shakes and my hair stands on end. Gandiva slips from my hand and my skin too is burning all over. I am not able to stand steady. My mind is reeling.[6]

It was due to this *Moha* that *Arjuna* fell a victim to 'greed and attachment':

> I do not long for victory, O Krsna, nor Kingdom or pleasures. Of what use is kingdom to us, O Krsna, or enjoyment or even life? Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, they stand here in battle, renouncing their lives and riches. Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers; uncles and fathers-in-law, grandsons and brothers-in-law and (other) kinsmen. These I would not consent to kill, though they kill me, O Madhusudana (Krsna), even for the kingdom of the three worlds; how much less for the sake of the earth?
>
> (*The Bhagvadgita*, I: 32-35)

> Even if these whose minds are overpowered by greed, see no wrong in the destruction of the family and no crime in treachery to friends.
>
> (*The Bhagadgita*, I: 38)

It is to dispel Arjuna's *Moha* that Lord Krishna explains to him the *Gyan Yoga* and *the Karma Yoga* which are "distinguished on account of the distribution of emphasis on the theoretical and practical aspects".[7] Lord Krishna talked about the *Gyan Yoga* in the context of the body and the soul and impressed upon Arjuna that the soul is the ultimate reality because it never dies. But, Sindi does not see the ultimate reality. He bothers himself about dead parents, dead uncle, dead Babu and dead June. The *Gita* preaches that "wise men do not grieve for the dead or for the

living." (*The Bhagvadgita,* II, 11) A man who practises *Gyan Yoga* treats "pleasure and pain, gain and loss and victory and defeat" alike (*The Bhagvadgita,* II: 38). But Sindi makes a difference between pleasure and pain, gain and loss and victory and defeat. Nay, he wants to enjoy pleasure, gain and victory but wants to run away from pain, loss and defeat. In order to justify his actions he takes the help of the concepts of the *Karma Yoga*. The *Bhagvadgita* preaches, "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction." (*The Bhagvadgita,* II: 47) Sindi forgets the last tenet altogether. He misinterprets, the first dictum also for he acts (e.g., he courts June Blythe), but he believes that accepting its fruits is not right rather he tries to disown its fruit. He does it on the pretext of not wanting any involvement but desiring detachment. Therefore, he refuses to accept the result of his courtship and refuses flatly to marry her. Actually, Sindi wants to become a *Yogi* without acquiring the pre-requisites for becoming one. Telling some of the characteristics to become a *Yogi,* Lord Krishna says:

> He who draws away the senses from the objects of sense on every side as a tortoise draws in his limbs [into the shell], his intelligence is firmly set [in wisdom]. Even though a man may ever strive [for perfection] and be ever so discerning, O Son of Kunti [Arjuna], his impetuous senses will carry off his mind by force.
>
> (*The Bhagvadgita,* I: 58, 60)

Sindi does not even think of applying a check on his senses but talks of acting as if in detachment. Sindi does not come under the purview of persons described by Lord Krishna as ". . .he who controls the senses by mind without attachment engages the organs of inaction in the path of work ...is superior." (*The Bhagvadgita,* III: 7). But, he [Sindi] is a man of false conduct for "he who restrains his organs of action but continues in his mind to brood over the objects of sense, whose nature is deluded is said to be a hypocrite." (*The Bhagvadgita,* III: 6) Lord Krishna preaches the philosophy of detachment in the following verse: "Fixed in Yoga, do thy work O Winner of wealth (Arjuna), *abandoning attachment* with an even mind in success and failure for evenness

of mind is called yoga." (*The Bhagvadgita*, 2:48) The Lord says that one has to work in detachment but Sindi misconstrues the whole philosophy of the *Gita* and says time and again that since he wants to remain detatched he will not get involved ("I don't want to get involved" he says repeatedly p. 74) meaning thereby that he will not act. To justify his stand he ruminates like a philosopher. "Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important" (p. 113). But the root cause of such rumination is *avidya* (ignorance): "The world is not an illusion, though by regarding it as mere mechanical determination of nature unrelated to God, we fail to perceive its Divine essence. It then becomes a source of delusion. . .it breeds ignorance."[8]

In actual practice of life Sindi is a pleasure seeker like the epicureans as is evident from his revelling and developing illicit relations, with Anna, Kathy, Judy, Christine and June on both shores of the Atlantic. But, whenever there is a question of marriage, he tries to be excused on the pretext of remaining detached. In the daily routine also he wants to be freed from commitment and involvement. For example, he does not want to fall in love because "To love. . .is to invite others break your heart" (p. 82). Yet he falls in love with at least five girls and is in the process of falling in love with the sixth when the novel closes. His escapist tendency is also evident from his trying to find out jobs in Calcutta and Bombay after he finds a mess in Mr. Khemka's business. He pretends to be a misogamist for "marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And gobbled each other up" (p. 71). But, it is merely a pretext for not owning responsibilities and not sharing concern in marriage. Sindi does not know that a person who escapes from his duties has nothing in store but pain. Since Sindi does not want to discharge his duties he feels the pangs of pain time and again:

> That was the first time I came face to face with pain. Until then I had heard and read about it, but now it was real, and it seemed to permeate everything, like the smell of death in an epidemic. All that I had thought of pleasurable had ended in pain, and after all this I was as far from finding the purpose of my life as I had been to start with...I spent a whole year wandering through the maze of my existence

looking for an answer. (p. 170).

Sindi's fatal flaw is that he forgets his duty while he remembers the detachment[9] which for Lord Krishna is a vital necessity to do one's duty.

For a person who is above love and hatred terms like pleasure and pain have no meaning as he becomes a *Sthita prajana* (*The Bhagvadgita*, II: 38, 55-68). But, this is not the case with Sindi nor is he immune to anger and hatred as he himself confesses:

> My love for June was streaked with hatred and anger. And with every passing day my love fed upon my anger and both grew stronger. It was as if two high voltage electrodes had taken not in my head and each of them kept spitting venom into my brain. The strain grew so great that I almost lost all ability to think logically for any length of time. Often I suspected I was going mad...."[10] (p. 137)

Of course this is not the behaviour of a detached person but of one who is "possessive, selfish and greedy" (p. 127). Sindi, though, wants to be and considers himself to be a detached person yet loves June to the extent of possessing her. He, as a matter of fact, remained cool towards June because he was convinced that "June would not leave [him], not for Babu anyway. What would she find in Babu that he didn't have? " (p. 118). The extreme case of infatuation with the self and June becomes even more apparent when Sindi muses: "what if June has left me?...Was I supposed to remain detached under the circumstances? But I also know that the more detached I became, the farther June could move away from me" (p. 118). Detachment in Sindi's case is another name for inaction. It is only when June dies that the realization dawns upon him that the fallacy consisted in his wrong thinking. He confesses: "Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it" (p. 192). It is not because of a foreign land that Sindi felt alienated there and considered himself a foreigner but because he did not understand the real meaning of detachment.

Sindi has reached his meaning of detachment because he considers this world to be only an illusion (Maya) because it is not permanent. He tells June explicitly. "Nothing ever seems real to

me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important" (p. 107). Therefore, he wants to know 'the real' and his relationship with it in the manner of an Indian sage:

> I climbed a hill and sat down on a withered stone. The sun had just risen and the valley seemed strangely ethereal in the clear light. Suddenly, I felt a great lightening, as if someone had lifted a great burden from my chest and all came through in a flash....Birth and death are real. They are the constants. All else is a variable....According to Hindu mystics there is a reality beyond all this. But I don't know I would like to know someday. (pp. 170-71).

Unlike Arjuna he confesses his ignorance yet he sticks to his concept of 'detachment' and 'non-involvement' until he meets Muthu who is really a *Karmyogi*. It is from him that Sindi learns his lesson of *Karmyoga*. It is Muthu who teaches him that some persons "mistake the action of their senses for their own actions" (p. 43). Muthu also suggests that *Maya* (Illusion) keeps the reality hidden: "It is all *Maya*" (p. 43), Sindi realizes the fallacy in his thinking when he says : "Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action not escape from it" (p. 192). He also realizes that detachment in the real sense of the term should not only be from the world but also from one's own self. It is only when one is detached from one's self that one can do some good to others. Sindi therefore comes to realize that he was the cause of Babu's and June's deaths: "I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not from myself. That is when the fatal error was made that ultimately led to Babu's and then to June's death" (p. 195). The realization of self delusion continues even further. Sindi realizes: "In many ways the past had been a waste, but it had not been without its lessons....We could have acted more responsibly, with greater detachment...circumstances and events had led to my detachment from all of them....But...I couldn't be detached from the world and remain attached to myself" (p. 221). Sindi has to struggle too hard to get freedom from the psychic fear of involvement: "Still, the old, nagging fear of getting involved with anything, anyone, was pushing through the mists of reason a line of reason that to the inevitable conclusion that,

for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with world." (p. 225) Muthu's meaning of detachment, though not codified in philosopher's language "sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved" (p. 225), prevails on Sindi and he acceeds to Muthu's request of taking over Mr. Khemka's business. Sindi works in a truly disinterested manner ("The fruit of it was really not my concern" p. 228), day and night and saves the business. Sindi's action in the right earnest brings him and his companions, who also work disinterestedly, peace and happiness.

The concept of *Karma* enunciated in *The Kathopnishad*, also finds a mention in this novel. We are taught in the theory that no action of ours, goes unrewarded or unpunished. Sindi uses the concept both in its right and wrong senses. He uses it in the wrong sense when he blames Mr. Khemka, Shiela and the civilization for Babu's death: "Behind Babu lay the stupidity and innocence of his father and his sister and the entire civilization" (p. 183). If Babu died, it was for his own faults and not for anybody else's faults: According to the *Karma* theory it is according to one's own deeds that one is rewarded or punished. Thus, Sindi's interpretation of the causes of Babu's death and laying the blame at someone else's door-step is untenable.

But, Sindi analyses his behaviour in terms of the *karma* rightly when he utters: "In the past I had let life lead me by the nose and I knew the damage I had caused in the name of goodness. I did not have any desire to be good anymore; I merely wanted to do my duty. And it did not quite seem that my duty lay in paying for the sins of Mr. Khemka" (p. 207) and further: "Mr. Khemka had to suffer for his own actions. In the past I had tried to put the consequences of my actions on others, or presumed to take over their actions as my own. Both had boomeranged. In the end, both had done more harm than good" (p. 208). Sindi also uses the theory rightly while explaining the meaning to Mr. Khemka: "I have sinned, and God knows, I have paid heavily for them. This time it is your name that is being called. It is you who must answer. That is the only hope of salvation you have left" (p. 215); and also in the passage: "But you can't get rid of your sins by just turning me out. They will stalk you from every street corner just as they have stalked me. We think we have our actions behind, but the past is never dead" (p. 216).

There are some traces of Marxism, too in the novel. This

philosophy is made use of by the novelist to highlight the class consciousness and class conflict. Mr. Khemka advises Sindi not to care for the talk of the workers in his concern. In the manner of a shrewd capitalist he (Mr. Khemka) says: "Never trust these lower classes. They have to be made use of, but kept in their place" (p. 134). Arun Joshi hints at the class conflict by highlighting the contrast in the living standards of Mr. Khemka the employer and Muthu, the employee. On the one hand is Mr. Khemka's air-conditioned house in the posh locality of the city, on the other is Muthu's one room in the lowliest area. While Mr. Khemka's house has been furnished lavishly, "luxuriously and tastefully" (p. 11) Muthu lives with eleven other members of his family in one single room. While Mr. Khemka hosts parties every now and then, Muthu can barely make both ends meet. The irony of the matter is that Mr. Khemka keeps himself busy in maintaining fictitious account books while Muthu works hard honestly. The class struggle becomes even more obvious when Shiela Khemka suggests to Sindi that he must own the responsibility of keeping two accounts and should go to jail instead of Mr. Khemka.

The fact that Muthu despite being an honest worker faces the crisis of losing his job for no fault of his own ("Now some big banker was going to turn (Muthu) out of that also, *not because he did not want to work but because another big shot had made stupid mistakes and hadn't guts to face up to them*" (p. 225, emphasis added), clearly hints that in the class struggle it is only the lowliest who suffer. The struggle between the haves and the have-nots becomes even more obvious when the haves are blamed for the miseries of the have-nots by Sindi :

> It is not I who should be ashamed of, Mr. Khemka, but you yourself. I have only been one of your victims. It is you who have swindled those miserable wretches in rags who push carts on your streets and die at twenty-five. It is you who have been telling lies and fabricating documents just so that you could air-condition this ostentatious house and throw gigantic parties for the hordes of jackals who masquerade as your friends (p. 214).

Thus, we find that Arun Joshi makes use of existentialism, Vedanta, the philosophy of *Karma*, and Lord Krishna's concepts

of 'detachment' and 'involvement' to bring out the inner recesses of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi. Since, in the novel, June and Babu die it can very safely be concluded that Arun Joshi rejects the American way of life (June was an American) and also the ignorant Indian approach symbolized by Babu. But, Sindi being a round character learns and modifies himself and saves himself from the doom. Despite the fact, that these philosophies are mentioned and practised by different characters in *The Foreigner*, the novel does not have an overdose of philosophy and does not tend to become a philosophical novel in the like of Raja Rao's novels or any communist-propagandist's fiction. Joshi suggests like Gautam Buddha does that there is misery in this world and it is generally caused by misconceptions of certain ideas. Joshi also suggests that there is always a way out of misery for a wise man who is ready to learn and know. It is in this respect that his vision is different from that of the existentialists and that of the absurdists.

Notes and References

1. Sujata Mathai, "I'm a Stranger to My Books", *The Times of India*, July 7, 1983, p. 8.
2. Arun Joshi, *The Last Labyrinth* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1981), p. 132.
3. "A Winner's Secrets: An Interview with Purbi Bannerji", *The Sunday Statesman*, February 27, 1983.
4. Arun Joshi, *The Foreigner* (Bombay *et al.*: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 167. All further textual references incorporated in the text of the paper refer to this edition of the book.
5. A man acquires culture only when he has roots. Both T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats subscribe to this view.
6. *The Bhagvadgita* I: 29-30 tr. S. Radhakrishnan (1948; rpt. Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1971). The translation of several verses of *The Bhagvadgita* quoted in the text are from this edition of the book.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, "Introductory Essay", *The Bhagvadgita*, p. 53.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
9. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explains the meaning of the term thus: "We have to act in the world as it is while doing our best to improve it. We should not be defiled by disgust even when we look at the worst that life can do to us, even when we are plunged in every kind of loss, bereavement and humiliation." *Ibid.*, p. 69.
10. Almost a similar idea of the process of the loss of intelligence has been described in *The Bhagvadgita* (2: 63).

12

The Strange Case of Billy Biswas: A Psychograph of An Alienated Hero

Elizabeth B. Hurlock[1] in her book *Personality Development* identifies three syndromes of alienation, viz., 'recessive', 'socially disinterested' and 'socially ineffective'. According to her, these syndromes "include traits that make a person disliked by others". Further, she mentions the following characteristics of an alienated person: reserved, listless, having withdrawn behaviour, self-bound and concerned with his own interests and welfare. Such a person, according to her, causes troubles to others by being noisy, boisterous, and shows off, by resisting authority, ignoring rules, regulations and rejecting the accepted cultural mores regarding behaviour, speech and dress. She goes to write:

> In general, the alienation is marked by such unsocial behaviour as teasing and bullying, making upleasant comments, being hypercritical, intentionally annoying people, lying and being sneaky, rising alibis or projecting blame on others and being sullen, sulky and moody. People characterized by the socially ineffective syndrome are annoying to others, while those characterized by the

recessive and socially disinterested are so distasteful that others have no desire to have aything to do with them.[2]

In the Encylopaedia Britannica[3] the following varients of alienation have been mentioned: (i) powerlessness, (ii) meaninglessness, (iii) normlessness, (iv) cultural estrangement, (v) social isolation, and (vi) self-estrangement. In the modern world of growing hostility, mechanization, urbanization, changing values, depersonalization, disorganization, self-misgivings, delusions, rootlessness, discontent, psychological and other maladjustments, alienation has become a part of life. The result is that estrangement from self and from society is almost a common experience.

A novel being "a perpetual quest for reality" and "the most effective agent of the moral imagination"[4] in the present day world, deals with the problems being faced by modern man, and the writing of Indian novelists are no exception to it. In these writings, the thematic aspect takes within its purview, problems like maladjustment, crisis of consciousness, cultural and psychological deviancy and human predicament in general. Therefore, a modern novelist has withdrawn himself from the 'outer world' to 'the inner world' in order to explore the 'essence of human living'. Arun Joshi is no exception to this trend of the contemporay literary world as he himself has admitted in one of his interviews that he was stimulated into writing to explore "that mysterious underworld which is the human soul".[5]

Arun Joshi writes for expounding his ideas vis-a-vis understanding his own true self; for he "essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and of the world and of (himself)...".[6] His statement echoes the influence of Albert Camus, Sartre and Kierkegaard. Arun Joshi admits this indirectly when he says, "I liked *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*."[7] The trio of the existentialists mentioned above has not only contributed to existentialism but has also given new dimensions even to alienation by dealing with this theme in their creative as well as philosophical writings. Arun Joshi treats the theme of alienation at a full length in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* which is an attempt to find out viable alternatives for "the most futile cry of mean,...in...smart society"—the predicament of an alienated personality of the modern world. Romi (Romesh

Sahai) the narrator puts it in the following words at the very opening of the novel:

> As I grow old, I realise that the most futile cry of man is his impossible wish to be understood. The attempt to understand is, probably even more futile. If in spite of this I propose to relate Billy's story, it is not so much because I claim to have understood him as it is an account of a deep and unrelieved sense of wonder that in the middle of the twentieth century, in the heart of Delhi's smart society there should have lived a man of such extraordinary obsessions.[8]

The idea of being "understood" is directly related with a person's being rooted in a place and tradition.[9] Billy's predicament becomes a special case when the reader comes to know that Billy's was a split personality—split between "primitive" and "civilized". Tuula Lindgren who is getting advanced training in psychiatric social work at Columbia, gives it an expression when she ruminates: "Billy feels something inside him, but is not sure."

Sometimes he is afraid of it and tries to suppress it...a great force, *urkraft*, a...a primitive force...it is very strong in him. . .It can explode any time. (p. 19) Such is a struggle of the man who finds his identity lost in the so-called civilized world. Though this conflict is termed a conflict between the primitive and the civilized by Tuula, who is a Swedish, yet it is a recurring conflict of "an essentially Hindu mind"[10] to Arun Joshi. At a later stage, Billy himself gives an account of his foresaking the existence which was powerless, normless and meaningless because of living in the fast degenerating society:

> What got me was the superficiality, the sense of values. I don't think all city societies are as ours. I am, of course, talking mainly of the so-called upper classes. I didn't really get to know the others. I don't think I have ever met a more pompous, a more mixed up lot of people. Artistically, they were dry as dust. Intellectually, they could no better than mechanically mouth ideas that the West abandoned a generation ago. Their idea of romance was to go and see an American movie or go to one of those wretched restaurants

> and dance with their wives to a thirty-year old tune. Nobody remembered the old songs, or the meaning of the festivals. All the sensuality was gone. So was the poetry. All that was left was loudmouthed women and men in three-piece suits, dreaming their little adulteries. (pp.176-77)

Naturally, Billy left this world of the so-called civilized men in search of a place where he was not treated as an outcast, was not culturally uprooted, and socially self-estranged. Billy's retrospection of his life at this juncture makes it evident that two of the three syndromes of alienation are dominant while the third one is dormant. Billy, therefore, rejects "the post-independence pseudo-Western values",[12] and reaches a place where "Nobody. . .is interested in the prices of foodgrains or new seeds or roads or elections and *stuff like that*" (p. 111, exphasis added); where friends "can die for each other" (p. 110); where lies "not Bilasia but [his] future, indeed the purpose of [his] life (p. 111)." It is in such a world that Billy is able to discover himself and to find out his life force: "that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life and without which his life is nothing more than the poor reflection of a million others" (p. 140). And whenever the idea of foresaking this life-force comes to Billy's mind he starts crying: "I sat with my hands pressed against my eyes. I don't think I made much noise but my chest heaved something terrible. In a little while I could feel the tears running down my wrists and forearms and getting soaked into my trousers at the elbows. . . I was terrified, as a child is terrified in the dark". (p. 117)

It is not only in India that Billy is unable to cling to his roots but also in "white America" during his sojourn there. Billy stays at Harlem in New York though he could very well afford to live in some other area like Manhattan; for he comes of an "upper-upper crust of Indian society". (p. 5) But his persistent quest for self-realization beckons him constantly to live at "the most human place" (p. 5) where he may nurture a sense of belonging, a spirit of succour and superintendence by wholly preserving his identity. Just for losing his identity he studies anthropology and not engineering which his parents want him to. Though he makes all his efforts to keep his identity yet he is not successful. His constant discomfiture to identify himself with his environs

is reflected in his aberred behaviour which, in turn, is projected in his way of living, eating and dressing and even thinking. Romesh's host decribes him as an "anarchist" and "thoroughly crazy even by Indian standards". (p. 5) These epithets are generally attributed to an alienated person as has been mentioned by Elizabeth B. Hurlock (see *Supra*). That Billy felt culturally estranged in New York also becomes clear from Romesh's description of the party where Billy goes on sitting silently without moving and drinking and suddenly beating the bango drums. Romesh and Tuula are unable to find out an explanation for Billy's aberred behaviour. Billy's reply is quite evasive because he says "I must have been disgusting drunk... what else?" (p. 18) But Romesh's description of Billy's "[eating] little and [talking] even less" (p. 16) drinking almost nothing, sitting silently in a corner even though there was plenty of eating, drinking and merrymaking at the party, proves that Billy feels secluded there. He does not drink much to have forgotten himself but makes a contrived effort to attract the attention of the persons at the party. Billy gets success in his attempt and soon everybody's eyes are rivetted on him. But, Billy largely remains and is certainly an alien in that land. Even, on his return to India, he does not feel homely, well-entrenched and temperamentally behoved as the true son of the soil, who is culturally well-rooted and socially well-beleaugured. A sense of nothingness pervades him: he suffers from a sense of a loss of socio-cultural ethos, finding himself wrapped in a vacuum, which his entire being is unable to comprehend. It dawns upon him when he listens to the *aarti*. The whole life in this realization becomes meaningless and futile to Billy :

> Returning home one evening, finding myself in a state of considerable agitation, I stopped at a temple. It was the hour of the evening *aarti*. I stood before the idols, my hands folded, my head bowed, incense of *dhoop* tickling my nostrils. I stood there while the pious voices of men, women, and children, rose and fell about me like little waves of a benevolent sea. What I had hoped to achieve by my visit I do not know....As I stood there, my eyeballs restive behind the quivering lids, *it suddently dawned upon me that it was all a great waste*,that the god who awaited me

> now was one to which no temples could be built. What awaited me now, I realized was Fate. (pp. 93-94 emphasis added).

It is at such weak moments only that a man takes certain decisions to fill up the void of his life. Billy's visiting the temple proves that he is trying to adjust himself socially and culturally but once again he feels totally disenchanted by the utopia and this results in his realization of wasting his time by living in a civilization where people are simply busy "making and spending. . .money". Billy's antipathy to the people and their civilization is reflected in the following extracts from his letters written to Linda at different times:

> I see a roomful of finely dressed men and women seated on downy sofas and while I am looking at them under my very nose, they turn into a kennel of dogs yawning yawning (their large teeth showing) or snuggling against each other or holding whisky glasses in their furred paws.
>
> . . . the so-called thinkers and philosophers and men like that. . . are hired to find solutions, throw light. . . on complications caused by this making and spending of money.
>
> . . . we are swiftly losing what is known as one's grip of life. Why else this constant blurring of reality? Who am I? Who are my parents ? My wife? My child? (pp. 92-93)

These letters show his concern for civilzation, society, individuals and also himself. His pinpointing several weaknesses, hypocrisy and leading his life on a superficial plane shows how alienated from all that is around him, he feels though he, also, wants to stick to it in one way or the other.

The products of this "bloody old phony" and "materialistic" civilization disappoint him even more. His frequent change of "beloveds" is really a search of a true life-partner. His marriage with Meena Chatterjee, a pretty young daughter of a retired civil servant is an impulsive action, no doubt, but this is prompted by Billy's search for viable alternatives. In that condition of mind, he finds no better girl than Meena. Perhaps. Billy thinks Meena's bond will be strong enough to chain up his split

personality. It is just like Shudhodhan's getting his son married with Yashodhara to chain up Siddhartha. The result is that the situation becomes even worse as Billy does not find in her a good partner, for she is too much down to earth for Billy. Meena is worldly wise and is a product of money-machine culture. She wants nothing but money and glamour which Billy hates. If he has a soft, tender and delicate heart and the mind of a mystic and a naturalist, Meena is just the opposite of Billy's temperament. She does not even attempt to understand Billy and establish a communication with him. In America, Billy's Swiss girl friend used to help him come out of the strange hallucinations. Being a psychiatrist, she also advises Billy not to give a free hand to them as they were "very dangerous" for Billy. In India suddenly their frequency increases. Perhaps Billy thought that his marriage with Meena would put a check on the hallucinations and Meena like Linda would help him. But, Billy is in the wrong as Meena could never establish a rapport with Billy. This marriage being a case of "uneven minds" results in utter failure. Meena's nature of drawing a line is realized by Seetu in her very first meeting. Seetu sketches her character beautifully when she says: "Did you see how she looked me up and down?...As if she herself was no less than Miss India or something. Did you notice her hair?" (p. 67) Such a snobbish and "self-possessed" character as Meena is, could never have helped Billy as a partner. Meena herself realizes that she is incapable of handling the situation with Billy. She complains of Billy's alienated behaviour which is reflected through his losing his temper on minor provocations, quarrelling "all the time", "snapping at everybody" remaining in a "dark mood", not touching his wife "for six months", always making fun of Meena, not keeping his promises to his wife, and the sense of resignation in Billy, which was perhaps the result of losing the battle every time. But, Meena simply complains: "Things are falling apart" (p. 70) and "Billy is getting stranger and stranger with every passing day". (p. 71) She does not make any effort to improve upon the situation. She confesses to Romi: "You see, I just can't handle the situation anymore....It is all probably my fault. Perhaps I just don't understand him as a wife should." (p. 72) On the other hand, instead of making a compromise with the situation to save it from worsening she spies on him ("Tell me, Romi, do you think he is having an...an

affair"(p. 74). She suggests three solutions to get rid of the rut: (i) "Go to your cannibals, if you find me so intolerable"(p. 76), (ii) "I wish I were dead" (p. 76), which she repeats twice in her eight sentences, and (iii) "I will go away if that is what you want". (p. 77) These three sentences of Meena estrange Billy even further as he undergoes mental agony but his reply is that of a well composed man : "That is not what I want, Meena. You know that." And while saying this, Billy is "more depressed than annoyed". (p. 77) Thus, Billy's last attempt to find a refuge also goes waste. And the second syndrome of alienation becomes even more conspicuous.

Billy is not only sensitive in the literal sense of the term but also conscious of the identity of his being. He therefore, himself feels concerned with the eternal questions like "Who was I? Where had I come from?" (p. 120) at a small age of fourteen. At this age he could realize that "something has gone wrong with [his] life:". (p. 123) And throughout his life, he goes on making efforts to seek his identity which he sees missing every time. He tries to find his identity in individuals like Linda and Meena; in societies like the American and the Indian; and in civilizations— the Western and Eastern, but everytime he feels frustrated and thoroughly cast down. During all these attempts, he moves away from his own self so much so that there is a danger of his identity being lost. It is at such a sensitive moment of self-estrangement that he listens to the voice of his other self. He has hitherto been denying it either in the form of curbing the hallucinations; or coming back from Bhubneshwar, where he feels, he belongs; or the call from Bilasia. His other self grows even stronger than and attractive to his temporal existence, which ultimately make him realize that he has been running after shadowy and illusory appearances. It goes on reckoning him:

> Come, come, come, come. Why do you want to go back? Why do you want to go back?... You thought New York was real. You thought New Delhi was your destination. How mistaken you have been: Mistaken and Misled. Come now, come. Take us. Take us until you have your fill. It is we who are the inheritors of the cosmic night. (p. 119)

Billy readily responds to the call and finally decides to

abjure this world to join the tribals to find not only his roots but also identity. He tells Dhunia the tribal-chief, "I am fed up of those slimy bastards who are camped across that river, and I am fed up of the millions who surround me in that wretched city where I come from" (p. 144)). Dhunia welcomes him calling *Mahaprasad* (an intimate friend). The so-called civilized world called him a rebel but the tribals look upon him as their friend; he succeeds in endearing himself amongst the tribals by curing Dhunia's niece Bilasia. He makes a contrived effort to join the other world of civilization. Moreover, this was not an impulsive action but a well thought out plan—Billy thought over this question the whole night. His abandoning of the civilization cannot be termed to be a simple case of rebellion of an angry child as Billy has tried to find roots and identify himself with individuals, society, civilization before bidding it farewell, but all of them disillusioned him. It is only when he is on the brink of breaking himself (self-estrangement) that he decides to join the other civilization which welcomes his entry. Billy moves out of the civilization so deftly that he leaves no trace of his slipping away to the "world primitivism". He gets it rumoured that he has been eaten away by a man-eater. Symbolically, it represents the permanent breaking of bonds between the "civilized world" and Billy.

Billy is all happy so long as he is in the company of the tribals because he has adjusted himself there all right. His behaviour is not deviant in the tribal society. Reaching there Billy feels quite at peace with himself. He gives vent to his exhilarating experience in the following words: "It was that passing moment that rarely comes in a man's life, when he feels that he has suddenly discovered that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life and without which his life is nothing more than the poor reflection of a million others". (p. 148) Though Billy makes this statement in order to describe his experience of "desire—too mild a word" which was aroused at the sight of Bilasia, nevertheless this is the whole experience of Billy at getting his roots. In a mood of celebration, he ponders over reaching the place where he belonged:

> Had he not known that every four weeks there was a moon like this, that there were hills as blue as these, and people

> in the hills that were all that he had ever wanted to be. Why did it take him thirty years to discover this. For all his so-called courage, he thought, he, even he, had been afraid and foolish squandering the priceless treasure of his life on that heap of tinsel that passed for civilization. (p. 139)

Billy reaches a world in Maikala Hills which is just the opposite of the world of the rat-race which he has abjured. The life in this materialistic world has become so obnoxious because of several complexes that when a man reaches a place, where people are so simple that you can "look through their hearts" he cannot take human relationship for granted. Even the narrator Ramesh wonders at this equation between human beings and says: "...I marvelled at the intense beauty of this human relationship that was born out of so much love...(p. 141) Billy tells Romi the formula of his happiness in the tribal civilization: "the earth, the forest, the rainbows, the liquor from the mahua an occasional feast, a lot of dancing and lovemaking, and, more than anything else, no ambition, none at all". (p. 146) And he is very right because it is the "ambition" which alone causes anxiety and rivalry, it is ambition" that makes one forget one's values and ultimately leads a person to his alienation; and only a tragic and catastrophic end lies in store for an alienated man. It is in this friendly, simple, pure, and disinterested (in the sense of the *Bhagvadgita*) atmosphere that new vistas of knowledge are opened before Billy. He is not only recognized as the king of that part of Chhatisgarh but is also treated as endowed with many divine gifts such as Chandtola starts glowing because of Billy's presence: he can revive a dead man; tigers run away at his sight and so on. All these "news-items" remain only sensational ideas for Romesh as he never gets a proof for substantiating the veracity of these impressions. But he realizes Billy's power of profound faith and unfathomed knowledge when the latter could do almost the impossible (i) by predicting rains when there was no sign of relief from the scorching sun; and (ii) curing Seetu's migraine which had escaped cure in spite of the treatment given by the doctors of the 'civilized' world for almost ten years. These are only stray examples of the knowledge possessed by Billy, which is just like the tip of an iceberg of the knowledge acquired in perfect harmony by belonging to microcosm and

macrocosm; living and non-living; nature and human beings. Although Billy laughs away the idea of his practising magic and he being considered the king, there is nothing but truth in it. The tribals hearing the news of Billy's death, turn out in a huge crowd and and the officers dare not carry away even dead Billy from the spot.

The tragedy takes place when the so-called civilized world infringes upon the world of simple tribals. In terms of alienation, the tragedy takes place when an established man is forced by the people whom he hates and abandons (and in turn alienates himself) for their petty gains to uproot himself. Seetu is tempted to send the news of Billy's reappearance to Meena and Billy's father. That Billy hated Meena is not only clear from their retrospective relationship but also from Rima Kaul's statement. It may be noted that Billy was emotionally attached with her (Rima) so much so that he started crying at the news of her death. Billy was not attached with his son, wife and father so Rima's statement that Billy "had nothing to come back to" (p. 87) becomes all the more relevant. Romesh tries his best to pacify Mr. Biswas and also Meena. But for them Billy's is the case of annoyance of an ordinary son. They do not realize Billy's malady and insist on meeting Billy even without his consent. They do not let any opportunity go unused and the matter is reported to the Chief Secretary who threatens to punish Romesh. Consequently, the power reaches the hands of Rele, the Superintendent of Police, who is no better than an instrument to penalize people who revolt against the norms of society. They are unable to understand Billy's problem. They fail because they are rational in their approach while Billy's problem is emotional. Rele and his men enter the village where Billy resides along with his wife and two sons. None of the villagers is ready to give a clue of Billy's existence but the mountebank intellectuals of the so-called civilized world have their means of getting success. An item of news is spread that Billy has killed a constable. The result is that far away a constable shoots a man who appears to be a tribal in dress and habit, but he is Billy. Billy dies uttering "You bastards" (p. 231), which again shows his contempt for the values of the "civilized world" which does not hesitate even to snatch his life. The most tragic part of the story is that none tries to understand Billy's problem even after his death. Mr. Biswas,

Meena, Chief Secretary, Rele along with his men and even Seetu were "only the representatives of a society which, in its middle mediocrity, bracketed men like Billy with irresponsible fools and common criminals and considered it their duty to prevent them from seeking such meagre fulfilment of their destiny as their tortured lives allowed". (pp. 229-30) The havaldar is troubled to know that he has shot the *Governor's son* (not the son of a man) dead and Meena without realizing her guilt simply wants the havaldar to be brought to book. None of these persons could realize that Billy was making a "search for truth" (p. 175) which is hard to come across and even more difficult to understand. Romesh says that Billy's case was disposed of without considering any of the factors which led to the ultimate tragedy—it was "disposed of in the only manner that a humdrum society knows of disposing its rebels, its seers, its true lovers". (p. 238) Romesh suggests that "nothing but blind blundering vengeance, howsoever camouflaged, awaits all those who dare to step out of its stifling confines. It is a confrontation whose outcome is as certain as the end of solitary boats beating against a maelstorm," (p. 238). Billy was perhaps in the know of this fact as is also suggested by Romesh but the fact remains that Billy took refuge in the tribal civilization only when there was no option before him and there was every possibility of his breaking down. He sought his identity with civilization, society, individuals and in the process felt like losing his own and remained rootless. It was only to find out his roots that he went to the tribal world which "guarded him as his own" (p. 239) until his reappearance from "the sanctury of the great God of primitive world." (p. 239)

In short, Arun Joshi in the first part of the novel narrates the story of a person who finds himself alienated from individuals, society and civilization as such. Though Billy goes on making efforts to remain a part and parcel of the society and civilization by pinning his hopes on individuals (the smallest unit of a society), yet he fails in his every effort. Billy instead of breaking himself (self-estrangement) prefers to abjure the civilization as such to join the world of tribals. It is in this part of the world that Billy finds his identity. Instead of feeling "rootless" (as he is an outsider there) he feels "established". But when some external forces compel him to uproot him from there to feel alienated, he prefers dying to succumbing to their wish.

Notes and References

1. Elizabeth B. Hurlock, *Personality Development* (1983; rpt, New Delhi : Tata McGraw Hill, 1976), p. 41.
2. *Idem.*
3. *Encylopaedia Britannica* (1977), p. 574.
4. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), pp. 205, 215.
5. Sujata Mathai, "I'm a Stranger to My Books", *The Times of India*, July 7, 1983, p. 8.
6. Arun Joshi's reply to M.R. Dua, dt., September 3, 1971.
7. "A Winner's Secrets: An Interview with Purbi Bannerji". *The Sunday Statesman*, February 27, 1983, p. 4.
8. Arun Joshi, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971), p. 3. Subsequent textual references incorporated in the article are to this edition of the novel.
9. T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats have emphasized this point in their writings. Both of them believe that a culture is the product of deep rooted traditions in the soil of a particular place.
10. Reply to M.R. Dua, *op. cit.*
11. "A Winner's Secrets", *op. cit.*

13

Arun Joshi's *The City and the River*

In his political novel *The City and the River*, Arun Joshi presents the malpractices in which people wielding political power indulge and the ways in which people respond to them. Taxonomically speaking, the malpractices presented here are of two kinds: the malpractices resorted to in order to gain and retain power and the malpractices resorted to in order to eliminate dissent. The responses of the victims range from total surrender to uncompromising resistance.

So far as the malpractices resorted to in order to acquire and retain political power presented here are concerned, the first of these is the practice of manipulating people and incidents in order to lift oneself to the apex by giving the impression that one is very popular and that it is the people who want one to have power. The Grand Master, the ruler in the novel, is the person who employs such tactics: he has a Rallies Master to organize rallies in his support to give the impression that he is loved by his subjects and he makes the Master of Trade propose in the meeting of the "Supreme Council" that he be made king, and argue that it is in the interest of the people, rather than that

of the Grand Master, that the Grand Master is made King. The following words of the Master of Trade:

> I shall briefly put forward certain criteria that the king of the city should meet. First, as already decided, he must be a wearer of the sacred thread. Second, he must come from a family which has already demonstrated its willingness to make sacrifice for this city. Third, he must command the affection of our masses and the trust of the armed forces and the business class. Fourth, he should be above the petty squabbles of the bazaar....Now gentlemen, the only person who meets these criteria is our beloved Grand Master. I propose, therefore, that he be requested to accept the onerous burdens of the king's high office.[1]

make the fact evident. Here the Grand Master stage-manages what he himself wants to achieve.

Another malpractice in which a person wielding political power indulges, as presented in *The City and the River*, is that he tries to ensure that he is succeeded by his descendant. In *The City and the River*, the Rallies Master is made to organize rallies also for the Grand Master's son so that people may gather the impression that he too has endeared himself to the masses, as the Rallies Master tells the journalist: "And now, journalist, I must gather rallies not only for the Grand Master but his son as well. The city must now face its final humiliation and I must be an instrument to it." (76) The Astrologer is the Grand Master's tool in the novel and advances attractive arguments in order to justify the perpetuation of the rule of a family when he argues:

> The sacred and mysterious has shown us the light and we have unanimously concluded that the Grand Master must immediately request his son to help him maintain the *Dharma Rajya* that he has established. We know what we are asking. We know we are asking for great sacrifice. No sacrifice is greater than the sacrifice of a young son. But we know we are asking this sacrifice from a family that has for a hundred years sacrificed its men, its women, its children, its wealth, its very all for the sake of this city. They

> have suffered endless privation just so that this city might prosper. Such is the family that we are asking this sacrifice of and we have no doubt that the Grand Master will listen to our pleadings. This city needs his son and he must give him to us. (101)

Here the narrator is satirizing the efforts to give power to a man under the pretension that he is obliging the country by agreeing to get power. The attack is overt in the following remark of the Minister for Trade: "At one go every tradition of the city is abandoned. But even that does not satisfy the Grand Master. He must crown the son as well, make him an heir apparent above the heads of all of us, put him on the Advisory Council, and, in days to come, train him for a thousand mischief." (111)

Another political malpractice in the novel is the ruler's making people regard himself as the nation. In the novel the Astrologer identifies the Grand Master with the river, that are the symbols of the ruler and the nation respectively, when he says to the Headman: "Do not bring the Great Yogeshwara into this, Headman. All I ask is that you also swear to the Grand Master. He and the great river are one." (164) His words remind us of the assertion that Louis XIV of France made, viz., that he himself was the state.

Another malpractice presented here is one of keeping oneself in the seat of power with the help of guns and thus using the army and the police, which are expected to protect the state from external and internal aggressions, in order to protect oneself from even the dissenters. The logic that is advanced in order to justify the mischievous approach lies embodied in the following arguments of the commissioner to the Professor:

> "If you ask me, the New Era is not enough. What we need is a violent clean-up."
> "But the people too might become violent?"
> "The people do not have the guns. Only we can afford guns, not that we should use them (for anything other than securing justice for the poor.)"
> "But the whole city is poor," the Professor pointed out.
> "That is why we need more guns. This might sound absurd

but the fact is that the poorer a city is the more guns its government needs." (82)

There also comes a time when the police use guns to eliminate opposition, nay even people who are staging a peaceful sit-in. The narrator reports: "Then all exits were barred from outside and all lights were switched off. For the next two minutes the machine guns sprayed the pitch dark hall with bullets....At the end of the two minutes the lights were switched on and the gunners were given another two minutes to finish their job." (184-85)

The novelist also shows the ruler indulging in the malpractice of giving ministerial posts to persons for political reasons rather than for their talents and capabilities. For instance, the post of the Education Adviser has been given in the novel to a person who has won the support of students and teachers, whose support the Grand Master wants to win, and talent or capability is not taken into consideration at all. The boy tells the Professor: "When the Grand Master inaugurated the New Era the Astrologer advised him to appoint the Education Adviser to the Council. That was the only way of keeping his shock-brigades from joining hands with the boatmen." (35-36) Giving posts for political reasons is likely to encourage politics rather than bring efficiency in administration.

The narrator in the novel also mentions an occurrence which evidences that according to the novelist public funds are misused by some rulers to gratify the needs, the wishes or even the whims of their near and dear ones, rather than meet the needs of the people. In this novel, the road called the Avenue Great River is straightened because the Grand Master's wife wants it to be so for no reason other than one of having a nicer view as she says: "How much nicer would the view be if there were a straight road running from here to the river." (37) Even though this involves making people living there lose their homes and hearths. It is sheer tyranny to deprive people of their homes and hearths only to make the view look nice to the ruler's wife! Views do matter, no doubt, but they do not matter more than homes and hearths.

That efforts are made by rulers to cajole people to continue tolerating poverty in the name of leading a life of spiritualism

has been shown in the novel when the people who have been deprived of their homes and hearths are exhorted to accept poverty on the ground that they belong to a country the civilization of which is spiritual rather than material, as if spiritual civilization fails to provide people even homes and hearths! The narrator reports: "The Astrologer issued an order next day authorizing the homeless to carry on living on the spots where they had their homes as though their homes were still there. The Asthough attitude, his orders said, was fundamental to spiritual civilization like ours, where even kings had preferred the purity of the forest to the suffocation of palaces. No doubt there would be initial inconvenience but, in the long run, all was bound to work out the best." (37) Here spiritualism is being used as a narcotic to keep people homeless and reminds one of the religion which, as Karl Marx put it, was made to work as opium.

Another political malpractice hinted at in the novel is the authorities' manipulating the prices and the trade of commodities in order to earn money for the state or for oneself. It is this malpractice that has been hinted at in the following piece of conversation between Pinstripe and the Minister for Trade:

> Pinstripe went on: "In the light of the approaching Festival of the River cooking oil can bring in excellent revenues. Prices can be pushed very high if the produce of the Gold Mines is cornered."
> "I shall do what I can do." (64)

A government needs money, no doubt, but its role is different from that of a trader.

Yet another political malpractice presented here is the ruler's declaring that people's demands will be accepted even when he has no intention to implement the decree and, thus, cheating people. The malpractice has been employed when the Grand Master instructs the Astrologer to issue a decree but not to think of implementing it. The fact comes to light when we read:

> "Yes, Astrologer, let us decree that all prisoners shall be told their crimes, or, set free."
> "Issuing a decree, Astrologer, does not mean its immediate implementation." (167-68)

The ruler who makes announcements of this kind is a cheat rather than a statesman.

The malpractices employed by a ruler in order to eliminate dissent, as presented in the novel, are again various. One of them is using coercion in order to frighten people into loyalty. In this novel, a large number of boatmen are sent to prison only because they refuse to declare that they are loyal to the Grand Master. The narrator reports: "a decree from the palace announced the beginning of a new era to be known as 'The Era of Ultimate Greatness.' It enjoined on the people to beware of the enemy within and the enemy without and reminded them of the Astrologer's Three Beatitudes. The new era was inaugurated with the arrest of a boatman and a clown. The boatman's wife had borne an illegal child. The clown was arrested because he had been heard to laugh when the old boatman was being put in chains." (23) The narrator is laughing at the ways of this ruler as there is no point in arresting a boatman for his wife's having borne an illegal child as it is his wife who deserves to be arrested for having cuckolded her husband rather than he. Likewise, a clown is there only to make people laugh and so there is no point in arresting a clown for laughing. Moreover, laughing is an innocent exercise and one indulging in it does not deserve any punishment. The Commissioner tells his subordinates : "The boatmen have spurned the Astrologer's three Truths, that they have ridiculed him, calling him a pompous fool; and have, indeed, burnt his effigies along the banks of the river." (24) It is evident that the boatmen are arrested not because they have committed any crime but because they have refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Master and have raised a voice of dissent against the Grand Master's hypocritical announcement of the beginning of "the Era of Ultimate Greatness".

Another such malpractice presented here is one of restricting the freedom of the press and not letting any independent newspaper flourish. It is this state of affairs that prevails in the Grand Master's 'City' in the novel. The fact has been brought to light by the Little Star who informs the Professor: "There are two newspapers in this city. One of them is owned by a trust of which the Astrologer is the head, the other is owned by a girl. The girl is five years old and cannot manage a newspaper. It is managed for her by the Master of Rallies. The Master of Rallies

also controls the satellite. The satellite controls the radio and the video. The Master of Rallies controls the satellite on the Grand Master's behalf because the satellite is the private property of the Grand Master." (88) It is almost impossible for people trying to find facts through the newspapers and the radio to find them in a country where such a situation is prevailing. Here people can know only the establishment's version of facts. Since most people are too credulous to distrust the press and the radio, they are misled into accepting the establishment's version and taking fiction as facts. In the novel, the Grand Master and his men are successful in spreading the fiction that Master Bhoma has hatched a conspiracy to unseat the Grand Master. The press is further restricted in the novel by forcing newsmen not to use their papers against persons in power. It is this malpractice that is being presented when the Rallies Master tells Vasu: "Unless his underground daily, *The Rumblings* ceased publication or changed its tune before the Festival of the River, which was only a month away, he would be expelled from the journalists' guild and the businessmen and the little girl who owned the newspaper would be instructed not to give him employment." (74)

Another malpractice adopted to discourage dissent is that of harassing the dissenters and causing them inconveniences in one form or another. It is this malpractice that has been highlighted in the novel when the Grand Master gets the boatman's musical instruments destroyed only because he himself has an "antipathy to music". (48)

Yet another such malpractice is that of creating a phobia of external and internal threats. It is this malpractice which the Astrologer is using when he is trying to argue the latter into silence and says: "It seems to me, Headman, you have come here only to counter me word for word. Nor does it mean anything to you that there are enemies within and without, that the very existence of the city is in danger." (21) He uses it even in his public speech when he says: "In the darkness of the night there has come a new wave of deadly assassins. Daggers in hand, they have crept out of their holes. They stalk the night, determined to strike at the very root of our lives, at the very heart of the man whose heart beat is the heartbeat of the city itself." (99)

A barbarous malpractice adopted here in order to suppress

dissent is one of disabling the dissenters. This malpractice has taken the form of blinding the Headman, the lady chief of the boatmen. The incident has been reported by the narrator in the following words: "During the night the guards pierced the Headman's eyes with long pointed needles and poured acid into the perforations." (164)

Still another political malpractice to discourage dissent presented here is that of the ruler's trying to restrict the growth of the population of the section of the people who are not loyal to him. The Grand Master tries to freeze the population of the boatmen, as they are politically so conscious that "[a]t the slightest excuse they raise rebellious standards". (15-16) When he issues the orders: "Let their numbers be frozen by law... the force of arms if necessary. Nothing else will suffice." (16) The novelist rejects the very thinking behind the philosophy of population-control when he says through the Headman: "You think an ant is born on this earth without God's will? If it is His will that there should be only one child to a mother then surely it shall come to pass. There is no need for the Grand Master or you to pass a law." (19-20). The Headman gives one more argument against the policy of population control: "Is it not true, Astrologer, that the city's granaries are full? And is it not a fact that out of the mud-people the city shall always extract work equal to what it feeds them, even as it is done to the animals?" (20) One may have reservations while agreeing to accept these arguments, but one cannot justify efforts to restrict the growth of one single section of society. However, the system of giving power to one who is supported by the majority of the citizens is very likely to encourage the rulers to try to speed up the growth of their men and to restrict the population of the dissenters and sooner or later the group manipulating the growth of the population of the country or even of the world, irrespective of principles, is likely to come to power and hold it.

One more political malpractice to discourage dissent adopted here is that of laying the blame for every unhappy incident at the dissenter's door irrespective of facts. The wrongdoer blames the victims even for his own repressive measures and, thus, tries to direct the edge of people's anger towards the dissenters. The fact comes to light when one finds the Grand Master blaming every boatman for his having been using the

police and the army against the latter: "He forces us to beat him with sticks and fire bullets and lasers into him. He forces us to call out the army." (58) The novelist is ironical here and is laughing at the wrong-doer's blaming the victim for the wrongs heaped on the latter.

The responses of the ruled, as presented in *The City and the River*, range from total surrender to an armed struggle. They can be grouped into two broad categories, namely, those of non-resistance and resistance. The path of surrender falls in the first category and that of struggle of any kind active or passive, physical or intellectual, literary or non-literary can be included in the second category. The path the common people other than the boatmen choose to adopt is that of non-resistance as they do not know what the announcement by the Astrologer implies as the narrator says: "The Astrologer's speech left the people pleased, because they liked big words, but confused....As was their custom, when they did not understand something, the people of the city decided to ignore the speech, to make believe that it had never been made." (18) The narrator's observation that "they did not understand" signifies that in his view those who do not understand the political implications of political steps can do nothing but surrender. Even the boatmen once resolve to surrender and the narrator reports: "When the marigolds pierced the top of the mango grove the boatmen decided to capitulate and take the Astrologer's oath and put their thumb impressions on affidavits of the same." (144) Since this resolution is not transformed into action, it is surrender in resolution and so a temporary adoption of the path of non-resistance. The path that Bhumiputra, the Grand-father, the Professor, Shani, and Shailja's brother adopt is one of resistance and all of them in one way or the other resist the Grand Master is taking in order to gain more power.

The resistance of the victims presented in the novel is broadly of two kinds: passive and active. Those who do nothing to counter the measures of the Grand Master but at the same time refuse to surrender can be called passive resisters and those who do anything physical or intellectual to counter those measures can be called active resisters. The Grand-father's resistance is an illustration of the passive resistance as he does nothing to counter the moves of those wielding power but only

keeps Bhumiputra at his rose-farm and puts a few obstructions in the way of the Police Commissioner and the son when they come to arrest Bhumiputra as a result of which he gets his house destroyed and loses his life along with Bhumiputra.

The active resistance presented in the novel is again of two kinds : physical and intellectual. The resistance of those who take up arms against the oppressor is physical active resistance while the resistance of those who simply educate people and explain to them what is wrong with the Grand Master's policies is intellectual active resistance. For instance, the resistance of the boatmen who take up arms to fight oppression and defend their way of living is physical active resistance. So is Shani's, as he too takes up arms against the forces of the Grand Master. But the resistance of Bhumiputra, who tells people the symbolic story of the naked king is intellectual active resistance. Even when Bhumiputra drafts a petition and sends the Grand Master a charter of four demands, namely: "One, immediate withdrawal of the Astrologer's oath. Two, return of all the vanished ones. Three, a public trial of all those responsible for the Professor's death and the Headman's blinding. Four, the legalizing of the illegal children as well as the restoration of future children." (187) So is the Headman's resistance when she is trying to persuade the Astrologer to let boatmen live in their own ways: "The boatmen, Astrologer, are children of the great river, and only of the great river. You must have known this when you made that speech. How can we become children of the Grand Master or of anyone else? Your speech upset the boatmen." (19)

The intellectual active resistance presented in the novel is again of two kinds: non-literary and literary. The intellectual active resistance in which the speaker puts his arguments in a straightforward manner is non-literary but the one in which the speaker puts his arguments through their objective correlative "or in an aesthetically appealing manner, is literary". For instance, the resistance of the Professor when he sets up a lottery stall and starts speaking to the crowds to convince them "that Bhoma is innocent" (122) is non-literary, while the resistance of Shailja's brother who tries to communicate to the crowds through a story that Bhoma is innocent is literary. Of these two, the novelist seems to favour the second one as he shows that the Professor's speeches fail to create the desired effect on the

audience while he lauds the way of Shailja's brother when he says: "With practice the Professor noted, Shailja's brother's style of narration had undergone a change. He recited the story of the naked king as though it were a ballad out of the city's hoary past and he an ancient bard who had emerged from out of the depths of the Great River to remind the city of a long forgotten truth. By the end of the second day, he had begun to sound like the Astrologer when he recited verses in the ancient tongue that no one understood. But everyone understood the young man and listened to him in silence." (129) Since this form of resistance is the most effective one, it can be safely concluded that the novelist stands for it more than for any other form.

The novel embodies the view that one who misuses political power cannot escape undergoing punishment for it even if he succeeds in eliminating all his opponents. In the novel, punishment comes to the offender from nature. Even though none of the men rising against the Grand Master succeeds in removing him as the Headman is blinded and later, deserted by her own followers, Bhoma's telling people that the king is naked comes to a stop when he comes to stay with the Grand-father and, later on, dies when the Son demolishes the Grand-father's house in an attempt to arrest him, the Professor dies as a result of his fast unto death in prison, and Shailja's brother immolates himself, there comes in the river a flood in the face of which the king finds himself helpless:

> The waters now reached the top of the fourth hill on which the offices of the new Grand Master stood. A wave went up encircling the base of the building. The touch of chrome and glass seemed to cause a special reaction in the foaming waters because all of a sudden the river was not a river any more. Under the all pervasive glow of the searchlights it turned into an ancient city, like the sea that had first condensed on the whirling planet a billion years ago. Waves nearly as high as the building rose in quick succession and threw a lock around the shining structure. The inmates of the palace shuddered in horror as the new Grand Master's building broke in the middle and floor by floor, frame by frame, fell into the sea. One last wave uprooted the foundations and sent them flying into the sky.

> The waters swept over the top of the hill and cascaded on to the other side in a loud waterfall. (157-58)

One feels that when human beings have failed, Nature is using water, one of the elements, to punish the guilty. The fact signifies that Arun Joshi posits his faith in, what has come to be known as, the Divine justice.

Now comes the question whether the novel provides a solution to the problem as to what kind of political system is safe for the people. Since the novelist is exposing how a democratic set up can be misused and replaced by dictatorship, it is evident that he stands for neither dictatorship nor democracy. The course of incidents included in the novel signifies that the novelist likes to have a political system in which the ruler does not oppress people, as when the Professor is lying on his death bed he has a hope: "There will be no Grand Masters. There will be a new world, a new race of men will be born." (167) Besides this, none of the virtuous characters in the novel says categorically as to what kind of political system is better than a democratic system. That signifies that Arun Joshi does not suggest any alternative political system but wishes to have one in which there is no oppression.

The novel has a few weaknesses. One of them is the prophecy in accordance with which incidents occur. The prophecy in question reads as follows:

> Who knows, who can read the signs,
> The workings of immortal time?
> A king I see upon a throne,
> In astronomer's grove the boatmen mourn,
> A thing of darkness growing dark,
> On city walls the shadow's mark.
> The river, I see, from a teacher rise.
> The hermit, the parrot, the teacher die.
> Under a rain the waters burn,
> To his kingdom at last the king returns. (26)

This prophecy is an embodiment of the view that the incidents which are occurring in the city of the novel are occurring because they are destined to occur. But if the incidents are destined to

occur, the persons who appear to be making them, occur cannot be held responsible for them and so deserve neither rewards nor punishments for them. For example, the Grand Master could have been charged with having declared himself king and, thus, having realized his ambition at the cost of people's civil liberties, cannot be charged with that in the light of the prophecy as the prophet has already written "A king I see upon a throne" and that signifies that the Grand Master is destined to come to the throne as the king of the city. This makes the Grand Master a simple instrument in the hands of destiny and frees him from the blame of any kind. When one has read,

> Finally the Astrologer said, "Grand Master, the time has come to let you know that there exists a prophecy that speaks of the coming of a king. Your dream is the herald that we have been waiting for."

one begins to feel that the Grand Master is a helpless tool in the hands of fate and has been chosen by Fate to declare himself king and so when one comes to the Minister's distorting facts and misguiding his listeners to agree to having a king in the land in the following words:

> As far as peace and stability are concerned, our history clearly indicates that we have been stable only when ruled by a strong yet benevolent king. Nation states and such things have never been understood by the average citizen. He always reserved his allegiance for the monarch. At the same time of course, the monarch took full responsibility for the citizen's material and spiritual needs. In short, gentlemen, what this city needs above all is a monarch, a king. And unless we first provide it with one the disturbances will continue, army or no army. (210)

the whole force of satire behind the speech is lost. If the city is destined to have a king, neither the Grand Master nor the Minister is to blame for his coming into existence and if it is so, there is no point in punishing him for what he has done.

Since it is a part of the prophecy that "A thing of darkness growing dark, Oh city walls the shadow's mark," (216) it is

evident that the king is destined to become more and more tyrannical and when one comes to the description,

> While the brigadier was soothing his old friends, taking advantage of his absence the 'police bastard' had ordered a commando to let Bhoma have a taste of his rifle butt. As the rifle hit his cheek the mathematics teacher felt half a dozen teeth fall onto his tongue. The second blow fell on his ear and his eardrum exploded into his skull. His eyes bulged at the pain but he did not utter a sound. As though a tap had been opened, blood gushed out of his ear and nose. (245)

one cannot lay blame at the door of the authorities as one knows that they are destined to grow dark and the "shadow's mark" is destined to reach the walls of the city.[2]

Likewise, since the prophecy includes the prediction. "The hermit, the parrot, the teacher die," (216) the sacrificial sufferings of the persons opposing the king's ways fail to become pathetic because one knows that they are instruments in the hands of fate and are destined to die.

One deserves punishment for a misdeed only if one has chosen to do it of one's absolutely free will. Likewise, one deserves admiration for a noble deed only if one has chosen to do it of one's absolutely free will. If an incident has already been prophesied, it is evident that one is doing a deed as an instrument rather than of one's own free will with the result that none of the characters deserves either any blame or any praise.

Another weakness of the novel is the novelist's showing that what the Grand Master does is not peculiar to him alone but is a phenomenon that occurs again and again when the Great Yogeshwara tells his disciple. "In the new city is another Professor, another Bhumiputra, another tribe of boatmen. There is also another Council and another set of Councillors. The men have other names but the forces they embody remain unchanged. And into all this when you go you will, perhaps, be known as another Hermit of the Mountain. And it is possible you will have a disciple whose name will be Little Star. To someone this replay, this repetition of things, might appear as a charade, a joke. But, then, whoever said the good Lord did

not have humour," (262) one gets the impression that the fault lies not with a person but with the chair because if the fault had been with a particular person, there would have been no repetition. In other words, this reminds one of the popular saying that power corrupts everybody. And if everybody occupying the position of the Grand Master behaves like this Grand Master, the Grand Master, who makes himself king in the novel, cannot be regarded as guilty. And if he is not guilty and all that he does has to occur whoever comes to the chair of the Grand Master, there is no point in blaming him for it. A hero or a protagonist has to have free will and is to be presented as facing misfortunes on account of having chosen a wrong path rather than the right one. Unless this is done the hero cannot be charged with having done any wrong.

One may say that the Great Yogeshwara's words, "It is ruled by another Grand Master, which, of course, need not always happen," (262) signify that the novelist does not regard it as inevitable for one to behave like the Grand Master of the novel and so he does give a Grand Master freedom of will and freedom to choose to behave like this Grand Master or otherwise. However, this single line is not in concord with the rest of the passage quoted above, as in every other sentence of the passage he is stressing the fact of repetition. Even the following remark of the Great Yogeshwara to the Nameless-One, "The main thing is to prevent this endless repetition, this periodic disintegration. But to achieve that we need purity," (262) implies that but for the cases of purity, the repetition is inevitable and this implication too implies that most Grand Masters are likely to behave like this Grand Master. One naturally comes to the conclusion that the fault lies with the post rather than the person holding it. However, the strength of the novel lies in passages such as this:

> Fear was the greatest ally of the kings and grand masters of the world, for without fear to freeze the hearts and the limbs of their subjects many a throne would have been toppled and many a crown blown off with the breath from the oppressed.
>
> And I saw that where man had thrown off his blanket of fear there alone truth had triumphed and great

civilization flourished and man had taken another step towards God....

This city, this world, all this is the manifestation of the One, and not the shadow of the Grand Master's ego, as the Grand Master might imagine. And it is he, the one without a second, who, secretly supports and guides all that you see, and what you do not see; and what you might have seen through the professor's telescopes....

There is the upward path that leads to freedom and there is the downward path that, for the moment at least, must lead to perdition. The city is free to choose either. (155-56)

Such utterances as this bring order where disorder has been prevailing.

Another such passage is the following one: "So let not fear sow confusion in your heart. Whatever happens the Lord will not forsake you, nor will work be fruitless. Of this you can be certain." (157) Such utterances as these give people hope and enlightenment and the readers of English literature are not likely to let them die.

Notes and References

1. Arun Joshi, *The City and the River* (New Delhi: Vision, 1990), p. 213.
2. Even the Grand Master's dream in which 'a vast host of naked men' form a circle like a noose around the Grand Master and the circle tightens 'until he could feel their breath of a volcano from out of the depths of the surrounding sea' and he shouts at them "This hill is mine," (14-15) signifies that the conflict between him and the boatmen is destined to be there, irrespective of what he does.

14

The Occult in Arun Joshi's Novel: *The Last Labyrinth*

Arun Joshi's novel *The Last Labyrinth* is the embodiment also of the view that there are some facts of the universe which are beyond the grasp of the so-called Western scientific approach which trusts only senses and 'reason'. The fact comes to light when we study the characters and careers of Som Bhaskar, Dr. Kashyap and Leela Sabnis, each of whom is equipped with the best kind of information in one or the other branch of Western education, but none of whom is able to do, nay even comprehend what Gargi, a devotee of God is able to do.

So far as Som Bhaskar is concerned, he is a degenerate product of the Western education. That he is the product of the Western scientific education is evident from his remark: "I had been to the world's finest universities, or what were supposed to be such. According to Mr. Thapar, who kept account of such things, a quarter million had been spent on my education...I knew...of Pascal, on whom I did a paper at Harvard: 'Let us weigh the gain and loss in wagering that God is, let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all, if you lose, you lose nothing."[1] This is also evident from his positing his belief in

Charles Darwin's theory of "the survival of the fittest" (*LL.* p. 19). And that he is a degenerate, so far as morality is concerned is evident from the fact that he is a man of loose morals, as he has had illicit relations with half a dozen women (*LL.* pp. 27-28) and ruins the business of Aftab Rai with the intention of compelling him to send their common beloved Anuradha to him for his exclusive use. It is a different matter that he is unable to realize what he intends to do.

That Dr. Kashyap is a happy product of the Western education system is evident from his having acquired the knowledge of the Western medical science and his having been using it in treating patients with its treating devices like "[s]leeping pills, tranquillizers, [and] warm bath" (*LL.* p. 10). That he has reached quite close to perfection in his field is evident from the narrator's observation that he is "brilliant and an FRCS" (*LL.*, p. 71).

Likewise, the fact that Leela Sabnis has acquired from the Western civilization what is best in a field—here it is the field of philosophy—is evident from the narrator's remark: "Behind her stood the philosophers of America and Europe. Freud as well, bearded and saintly, indefatigable, groping in the night of man's mind, strewn with piss and excreta, struggling to put man together,—the pervert and the insane, but also those who, whole otherwise, walked the beaches at night and cried for the spirit, Leela Sabnis was an explorer, trained in Michigan in the tools of exploring" (*LL.*, p. 77). The narrator means to say that she has read a lot when she remarks: "Two rooms, may be three, crammed with books. Books on the floor, books against the walls, on the toilet, inside the laundry bag, on the bed" (*LL.*, p. 77).

None of the three is able to reach the heights which Gargi has attained: nay neither Kashyap nor Som Bhaskar is able to comprehend Gargi. So far as Som Bhaskar is concerned he tries to get things and persons with the help of money, and believes he can make or mar persons with his money. The fact becomes evident when he is trying to buy all the shares of the business of Aftab Rai in order to compel him and Anuradha to submit to his desires. But for Gargi the shares are a trivial possession and she gives Som without any hesitation the package which contains the share documents. Moreover, Bhaskar is reaping the consequences of his loose way of living as he is suffering from

a variety of ailments and has eaten so many medicines that now medicines have stopped making any effect on him and he himself reports: "There is nothing that he has not tried. Sleeping pills, tranquillizers, warm baths. But three to ten it remains and four to six. He is puzzled. I can see that. Your blood is only chemicals now, he says, pure unmanageable chemicals" (*LL.*, p. 10).

Dr. Kashyap believes that it was Gargi who had saved Som Bhaskar when the latter was almost dead (*LL.*, p. 206) even though he asks her whether it is so. What Gargi has done, if she has, is beyond the reach of Dr. Kashyap's scientific grasp of disease and death. Kashyap is not a superstitious person. There was a time when he had told Som's father: "Throw out all those gods and goddesses and she might have a chance" (*LL.*, p. 22) but now it is he who asks Gargi whether she had saved Som (see *supra*) and that signifies that he has realized that occult powers do exist and that Gargi has acquired spiritual capabilities.

Leela's learning has not enabled her to have clarity in her ways as she is a muddled-headed thinker, a loose-moralled person indulging in extra-marital love affairs. The fact has been stated explicitly by the narrator in his remark: "Leela Sabnis was a muddled creature. As muddled as me. Muddled by her ancestry, by marriage, by divorce, by too many books" (*LL.*, p. 77). The view has been expressed in the novel not only covertly but also overtly through Som Bhaskar's father who says many realize this paradox. We assume that the immediate stimulus to an occurrence is its cause, don't we?...There are processes in our planets that use certain methods of providing heat. But the same heat could be provided by totally different means" (*LL.*, p. 26). Unlike the occidental scientists but like the oriental mystics he finds the movement of the world cyclic and asserts: "Have you noticed the fundamental unity in the construction of the universe, K? Great galaxies oscillate, so does the minutest particle of the quartz. It is the same cell that is the building block of every animal. Everything happens in cycles, Birth, Growth, Decline and Death. Couldn't there be a First Cause too. So could all sound. So could all love. Hate. Anger" (*LL.*, p. 27).

The view finds embodiment also in the role that Gargi plays in the novel. She is believed, as has been pointed out, to

have saved Bhaskar from death when the doctors treating him had declared him ninety-nine per cent dead. The belief lies embodied in the following words of Doctor Kashyap who asks Gargi: "I am a medical doctor. I do not believe in things in which Anuradha believes. But I know for a fact that Som had no chance whatsoever and I want to know: did you save him? Anuradha says you did. And in return for what you did, she says you made her promise that she would give up Som. For ever. That to her Som would be dead, either way" (*LL.*, p. 206). What is implied in Gargi's reply: "I cannot tell you what you want to know" (*LL.*, p. 206) is the suggestion that at least she believes she did save him, though the details as to how she did so have not been given here. The fact that she instructs Som: "There is no harm in believing that God exists" (*LL.*, p. 213) when the latter asks her this question, signifies that she is trying to convince him that miracles do occur in the world as a result of God's intervention.[2]

Gargi's occult capabilities have been shown to be casting their influence on the persons who come into contact with her. For instance, when Som Bhaskar is with her, "the plump rosy face [and] the intelligent understanding eyes [of hers evoke in him] the overwhelming compulsion to talk and talk and talk" (*LL.*, p. 202). Another proof of the fact that Gargi possesses occult capabilities is that she can foresee incidents and find out what is happening even at those places where she is not present. She foresees an incident, for instance, when she reaches the temple up the mountain to give the package to Som, even though Som has not sent her any information to the effect. And she finds out what is happening at a place where neither she nor her representative is present when she finds a man to help Som to come to her and Dr. Kashyap is right when he tells Bhaskar: "She must have known we are coming....Or, why the guide?" (*LL.*, p. 202).

It has also been suggested that her very presence effects changes in people's thinking and intentions as Som Bhaskar drops his intention to buy Aftab's business when she visits her cottage. The fact is evidenced by her asking himself: "Why did I get humbugged?...By that woman Gargi whom I had visited that night on the other bank of Ganga six months ago?...And, yet it was in that cottage of hers that night, that I had first felt my will begin to weaken, the will to capture Aftab's company" (*LL.*, p. 51). Though Som Bhaskar is an atheist and Gargi tries

to make him a theist, yet when he is in Gargi's room at the temple up the mountain there comes a change in him: he, suddenly, has "the idea of visiting the deity of the temple" (*LL.*, p. 207) and, thus, has become a theist even if for only a short while.

The narrator also reports people undergoing mystic experiences in her presence. For instance, even Som Bhaskar, who refuses to accept the existence of any supernatural being has one such experience when he is in Gargi's room: "that night, in Gargi's room, I thought a shadow had brushed past me, touching me lightly, telling me how to rise myself but all was confusion once again" (*LL.*, p. 110). The fact signifies that she not only possesses occult capabilities herself but also can make others conscious of their existence.

The novelist provides one more proof of the fact that Gargi possesses some spiritual powers: when Som Bhaskar tells her that he often dreams that he is flying an aeroplane and that it crashes against a mountain, she writes to him: "You will not have this dream again if you don't want to" (*LL.*, p. 205) and, then, Som actually does not have this dream afterwards. As she gives him neither a medicine nor any psychiatric treatment, it can be safely inferred that she employs her occult capabilities in order to achieve the desired effect.

However, Gargi does not claim she has acquired complete knowledge of the spiritual affairs. She claims to have at the most peeped into those affairs as she says: "We are like children trying to reach up to a crack in the door to peep into a room" (*LL.*, p. 215). But even with this peep she can do miracles!

Joshi mentions two other characters who have been reported to be having occult capabilities. They are Gargi's father and her grand-father. Gargi's father is believed to cure patients. The piece of information lies embodied in the following remark of Anuradha: "Her father was a Sufi, a pir. He lived with Aftab's father. He gave Aftab whatever eyesight he has" (*LL.*, p. 60).

That Gargi's grand-father too had spiritual powers at his command is evidenced by the incident narrated by Anuradha in the following passage: "One evening the ceremony of the final parting was conducted between the father and the son. That night, it is said, the father had a dream. A dervish told him to give up what he loved most and God would restore his son. In the morning, the father called the mullah and his wife and he

went around his son's bed three times and prayed to God that his life might please be taken and his son's spared. The next day he fell ill. His son gradually recovered. On his death-bed the father called his son and told him, 'You had asked for a sign. God has given it to you.' The son got well, and disappeared for a few years. (*LL.*, pp. 60-61).

Joshi has not shown how Gargi, her father and her grandfather use the occult capabilities in order to save Som Bhaskar from the clutches of death and the like or even how they were able to acquire them. However, some observations of Gargi can help us have an insight into the whole affair: once she asks Som to believe that God exists [see *supra*], and once she tells Som that Anuradha is his *shakti* (*LL.*, pp. 24 and 121). The first observation of hers signifies that, according to her, man is not all in all in this world and that there exists a Being above him and that it is the Supreme Being who is the Supreme Governor of the universe with the result that one trying to trespass the moral code set up by Him for human beings will be doing something undesirable and is likely to become a victim of God's ire.

Her telling Som that Anuradha is his *shakti* (see *supra*) signifies that she is a *shakta*, a worshipper of *Shakti*, the embodiment of the Cosmic Energy.

If one closely observes Gargi's possessions, one can get a clue into the way she has acquired spiritual powers. The narrator mentions that in her room she has "[a] Sri Chakra, drawn on a parchment and framed hung on one wall" (*LL.*, p. 120). She has this Chakra in her room at the temple up the mountain too. The Sri Chakra is a symbol which is made use of by the practitioners of the science of *Tantra* to achieve their ends. Since this is there in the possession of Gargi it is evident that she makes use of this and also, possibly, some others of the kind. The narrator does not tell us, however, whether Gargi saved Som Bhaskar with the help of this Chakra and, if she did, how.

However, simple praying to God is ineffectual according to Arun Joshi as he shows that Som Bhaskar's mother died of cancer and her prayers to Lord Krishna did not help her at all. The narrator narrates: "I told her about how she developed cancer, preferred Krishna to medicines, and died" (*LL.*, p. 100), it is evident that he does not believe in the efficacy of praying and regards it as fruitless.

However, one can appreciate the novel even if one does not believe in the existence of any supernatural being because in that case one can regard the incidents as chance-happenings and the characters' views as mere views. The novelist has done so by not making any categorical statement as to the role of the occult and by merely suggesting that some incidents (see *supra)* might have been caused by the occult powers.

Notes and References

1. Arun Joshi, *The Last Labyrinth* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1981). All the subsequent quotations from the novel (*LL.* for short) refer to this edition.
2. This view resembles a great deal the view expressed by Bimal Biswas in Arun Joshi's novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*: "... there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above it and below it, and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them" (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1987 [1973], pp. 54-55).

15

Evil in Shashi Deshpande's Novel: *Come Up and Be Dead*

Evil is the greatest of human problems. In Shashi Deshpande's novel *Come Up and Be Dead* it makes its appearance in three forms: revengefulness, lasciviousness, and proneness to commit murders. Revengefulness is represented in Varma, a member of the Board of Governors of the School, who makes school-girls serve as call girls for the simple reason that his own wife had deserted him soon after marriage.[1] Lasciviousness makes its appearance in Sanjay, Sharmila, Mridula and the unnamed stranger to whom Mridula is taken as a call girl. Sanjay has made Sharmila his mistress, who has been one since she was fourteen (261), Mridula becomes pregnant even though she is unmarried (9), and the stranger comes to the hotel 'Open Sesame' to have a call girl (251). The proneness to commit murders is there in Sanjay, Girish, and Mridula. Sanjay kills Pratap and Jyoti, and makes attempts on the lives of Sonali and Sharmila ; Girish resolves to eliminate Devayani and Mridula kills herself.

Revengefulness takes a very ugly form in Varma as he is driving innocent girls into the morass of immorality for the humiliation he had to suffer on account of his wife deserting

him. A revengeful man, if he acts logically, can cause harm to the person who has harmed him rather than the persons belonging to the sex of the offender. But here Varma is causing harm to the girls who have caused no harm to him. If Varma had been an ordinarily revengeful man, he would have harmed, if at all, his wife, though it is ignoble for a man to cause harm to a woman, especially his wife. But Varma treats the whole female sex as his enemy. That is one of the reasons why his behaviour is found to be odd, if not shocking, by Girish and Prasad. Girish tells Devayani:

> Strange, isn't it, that a man who has so much money should make himself vulnerable by going in for a thing like this? When I went to him I knew at once that he enjoyed this trade in girls. It was not just the money for him. Some sort of a kink, I suppose (252).

Inspector Prasad also testifies to the fact 'Varma carried a canker of hatred for young women within him..." (p. 264). Varma's revengefulness is akin to the revengefulness of Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham in the novel *Great Expectations*, who began to hate all male human beings because one of them named Compeyson had humiliated her by not turning up to marry her on the appointed day and had broken her heart, and who took revenge on Pip by making Estella break his heart. As a matter of fact, this is a kind of cowardice as instead of inflicting harm on the wrong-doer Varma inflicts harms on the persons who have caused no harm to him and are too weak and helpless to do anything by way of retaliation. Francis Bacon's remark that "...Vindictive Persons live the Life of Witches, who, as they are Mischievous, so end they Infortunate"[2]—appears to be true in Varma's case. What is noticeable in this regard is that he occupies a respectable position in society, as he is a member of the Board of the Governors, and also tries to continue to be respectable. He silences the people, who come to know of his diabolical activities, either by bribing them or by getting them killed. This is evidenced by Girish's remarks: "But his reputation mattered to him, though, and so there I was....I could make a regular sum of money by just holding my tongue" (252), and by his getting Pratap killed.

How degenerate one becomes in the state of lasciviousness[3] can be seen in the character of Sanjay. His relations with Sharmila are, from the Hindu point of view, incestuous, as Sharmila is his cousin, and for the Hindus a cousin has to be treated as a sister. Moreover, it is Sanjay who is "responsible for Mridula's pregnancy" (238). But he marries neither Sharmila nor Mridula. He also tried to trap Bunny, who tells "her father a story of being pestered by a young man" (238), and if she had not left the town she must have met the fate of Mridula. Likewise, the strange man who used Mridula as a call girl in the hotel 'Open Sesame' was degenerate to the extent that he used her body to gratify his lust when she had been made to drink heavily and was not conscious of what was happening to her body. Girish reports: "They must have got the girl drunk, I suppose, for the next thing she remembered was that she was alone in that room with the strange man" (251).

It is lasciviousness that brought Sharmila "totally under Sanjay's influence" (261), because if she had not been lascivious she would not have remained under his influence *totally* even if she had surrendered to him at the age of fourteen. She is fully under his influence so much so that she acts as an accomplice in his crimes as a murderer and in his efforts to trap school-girls to become call-girls.

Mridula's lasciviousness has its roots in her silliness as she tried to have boy-friends and lovers under the impression that by having them she would become 'modern'. Sonali says:

> You don't think, do you, that Mridula just got into trouble like that? Oh, she was a crazy girl, all right. She was dying to get into the mod crowd and have boy-friends and go running all over town, doing nothing but being silly. She used to flatter Bunny like mad. And Bunny used to ignore her. One day Bunny invited her at home and Mridu was so thrilled like as if Indira Gandhi had invited her or the Queen of England. (43)

Mridula is foolish enough to think that an illicit physical relation is "Just a bit of fun" (72). Had she not been excessively eager to become 'modern', even Sanjay would not have been able to do her any harm. Her eagerness to have boy-friends clearly

indicates that it was her lasciviousness that made her what she became and caused her death. The fact also signifies that the post-Independence pseudo-Western values which have become quite popular in, at least, a section of the Indian society, are, according to Shashi Deshpande, dragging young people away from virtues.

So far as the proneness to commit murders is concerned, it can be noticed, as stated earlier, in Sanjay, Girish and Mridula. In *Come Up and Be Dead* six attempts to murder are made, three of which are successful while the other three are unsuccessful. The successful attempts are made on the lives of Mridula, Pratap Rao, and Mrs. Jyoti Raman, while the unsuccessful attempts are made on the lives of Sonali, Sharmila and Devayani. Sanjay is a participant in all of them either as the doer or as an accomplice. In the case of Mridula, whose is a case of suicide, Sanjay acts as an accomplice. As Sharmila remarks, Mridula "went to Sanjay after that. I think he gave her... whatever she took" (261). Both Pratap and Jyoti are killed by Sanjay as is evident from Girish's observation:

> The boy Sanjay came to me that night. He told me Pratap had seen the girls, Sharmila and two others, in the hotel. He had followed them to a room and confronted the girl Sharmila with his accusations. And so Pratap had to be got rid of (252).

Devayani also asserts: "Bunny... knew something about this school.... And she told Mrs. Raman about this. And because of this knowledge the woman died" (181). Sanjay tries to kill Sonali only because he suspects that she also knows something about his involvement in the trade of call-girls, because he feels that "her mother had told [Sonali] something" (260). He makes an attempt to kill even his mistress Sharmila because she hinders him from killing Sonali. Sharmila avers: "...I knew he was going to kill Sona. And when I tried to stop him, he tried to kill me...." (260).

The process that makes Sanjay, a lover, become a murderer trying to kill his own beloved, reminds one of the process described in the following verses from the *Gita:*

dhyayato visayan punsah sangas tesupajayate
sangat sanjayate kamah kamat krodhobhijayate
krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohat smrtivibhramah
smitibhransad buddhinaso buddhinasat pranasyati.

(II. 62-63)

(When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire comes anger. From anger arises bewilderment, from bewilderment loss of memory, and from loss of memory, the destruction of intelligence and from the destruction of intelligence he perishes.)[4]

When an attempt at Devayani's life is going to be made by Girish, she notes "that the number he was dialling was not the one I had given him" (244). Girish was trying to contact some murderer, rather than Prasad, and that murderer presumably was Sanjay. Since Sanjay kills or tries to kill the persons who have come to know of the racket in girls being carried on under 'the Big Chief' Varma, it is obvious that he tries to kill those people who can get him punished for his immoral and illicit activities.

Girish's proneness to get people killed has two emotions at its root—fear and greed. It is fear that leads him to resolve to get Devayani killed because he cannot afford to let her "get away from here with that knowledge" (246). If Devayani is allowed to survive, he fears, she may give the details of the racket in girls to the authorities and he may have to undergo punishment. Here he is not simply an accomplice in the crime, but the chief who resolves to eliminate Devayani with the help of a murderer, even though he claims he is "not involved in anything" (252). The Duke in Browning's poem "My Last Duchess" killed his wife because he was jealous. *Come Up and Be Dead* projects the view that people kill other human beings in the state of fear.

In the murder of Pratap, Girish acts as an accomplice. When Sanjay wanted Pratap to come out to be killed it was Girish who "got Pratap out of the house" (252) and left him there to be taken care of by Sanjay's cruelty. That Girish becomes an accomplice of murderers for money is evident from the following extract from the novel:

> Resolutely I retrieved it, "Why did you get into it?" He shrugged again, with a trace of imitation this time. "Why? The usual reason, of course, Money" (246).

This kind of behaviour reminds one of the behaviour of Duryodhana and his friends who had resolved to kill the Pandavas out of greed, and about whom Arjun says in the Gita :

> *yadyapyete na pasyanti*
> *lobhopahatacetasah*
> *kulaksayakritam dosam*
> *mitradrohe ca patakam*
>
> (I. 38)
>
> (Even if these, whose minds are overpowered by greed, see no wrong in the destruction of the family and no crime in treachery to friends?[5]

Girish is so well-behaved that it is difficult for one to detect his vices. Even such an intelligent girl as Devayani finds nothing suspicious about him for long and reveals even her innermost feelings to him in the hotel, though afterwards she finds it embarrassing as is evident from the following remark: "I was embarrassed enough by all the revelations I had already made to this strange man, I hadn't meant to say any of it" (134). Devayani's revealing to him that she has not married because her "mother was epileptic" (133) makes it evident that she is trying to have intimacy with him and all this has been caused by Girish's simulative good behaviour. Even though he is Sanjay's accomplice in Pratap's murder, he goes to the hospital to help Devayani in taking care of Pratap. He pretends to be a well-wisher of the family as is clear from his remark: "They can't say anything... not as yet. Nothing to do but keep him under observation. How did it happen?" (142). He reminds one of Edmund Spenser's Archimago who is a villain but pretends to be a saint. Just as Archimago sends the Red Cross Knight away from Una and poses to be absolutely innocent when she comes to ask him where her knight has gone, even though Girish knows all about Pratap's death, he pretends to have been absolutely unaware of it. It is such a person who in Bacon's words "industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be that he is not".[6]

The proneness to kill someone takes another form in Mridula. She kills herself when her pregnancy is likely to result in a scandal. Pratap informs Devayani: "Now suddenly she began to cry. Noisily like a child. She didn't even bother to wipe her eyes or her running nose. Just sat and bawled" (72). One may regard her suicide as her punishing herself. But the fact is that her suicide is not a case of inflicting punishment on her because instead of finding fault with herself she is reported to have been trying to find fault with others, as Pratap reports: 'I never knew', she said when she had calmed down. 'They never told me' (72). If she had committed suicide in order to inflict punishment on herself, she would have refrained from vindicating herself.

The vicious activities of the offenders in the novel signify that the Inspector is right when he asserts:

> I believe in the theory of evil. Just simple evil that drives men and women to deeds that seem incomprehensible to others. And yet, the truth is that all of us carry this potentiality for evil within us. We have to struggle against it all our lives. Some prefer not to struggle, that's all (264-65).

Since this view lies embodied in the novel, it can be accepted to be the view of the novelist herself. Accepting this view would imply rejecting the one upheld by non-dualists, i.e., that there exists only Brahman and that there exists no evil. Shankaracharya asserts: "The Upanishads teach thus: Starting with the text, O amiable one, before its creation, the universe was but Existence (Brahman), one without a second" (*Chandogyopanishad*, VI. ii, 1). He further says : "That (Brahman) visualized, 'I shall become many, I shall be born'. That (Brahman) created fire" (*Chandogyopanishad*, VI, ii. 3). In the Upanishad the universe, manifested as names and forms and referable by the word 'it', is first ascertained to be identified with existence 'before its creation'; then the text shows that the creatorship of fire, etc., that follows the visualization of future creation, belongs to that very entity, called Existence...".[7] Acceptance of the view that evil exists in the world would mean subscribing to a philosophy that accepts the existence of evil.[8]

Shashi Deshpande also ponders over the question as to

what can be done to keep people away from wrongdoing. As has been pointed out Prasad maintains: "And yet, the truth is that all of us carry this potentiality for evil within us. We have to struggle against it all our lives." He seems to suggest that one keep oneself away from sin if one struggles against evil all one's life and keep one's evil desires under control by making conscious efforts to achieve the goal. Struggling against the evil inside oneself is not a new concept in India. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to try and restrain his mind from the evil and turn it to the good:

> *sankalpaprabhavan kamans tyaktva sarvan asesatah*
> *manasaivendriyagramam viniyamya samantatah*
> *sanaih sanair uparamed buddhyadhritigrhitaya*
> *atmasansthan namah krtva na kincid api cintayet*
>
> (VI. 24-25).
>
> (Abandoning without exception all desires born of (selfish) will, restraining with the mind all the senses on every side, let him gain little by little tranquillity by means of reason controlled by steadiness and having fixed the mind of the Self, let him not think of anything else.)[9]

But those who do not restrain themselves from evil also have to be taken care of. Shashi Deshpande's suggestion is that steps have to be taken against people indulging in wrong-doing. When Prasad says: "The heroics are still to come. The man Varma is hoping to get away. But, if I have anything to do with it, he won't... all his money and influence notwithstanding" (p. 264), or when he resolves to arrest Sanjay, as is evidenced by the following conversation between Devayani and Prasad:

> "Have you got him? The man who injured Sharmila?"
> "Not yet, but we will. He can't escape us for long" (239),

he is suggesting that wrong-doers are to be punished. And since Prasad's efforts to detect the evil-doers have been successful, his approach may be regarded as the approach which his creator would subscribe to. In other words, just as Lord Krishna, in the *Gita*, stands for eliminating the wicked when he says:

paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ta duskrtam
dharmsansthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge

(IV. 8)

(For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age.)[10]

Shashi Deshpande subscribes to the view that the wicked have to be punished, whatever the odds.

Notes and References

1. Shashi Deshpande, *Come Up and Be Dead* (Delhi: Vikas, 1983), p. 264. All subsequent quotations from the novel are from this edition.
2. Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge", *Bacon's Essays*, ed. Alfred S. West, (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), p. 12.
3. The passion of lasciviousness has been described as one's enemy by Lord Krishna in the *Gita*:
   kama esa krodha esa rajogunasamudbhavah
   mahasano mahapapma viddhyenamih vairnam

   (III. 37)

   (This is craving, this is wrath, born of the mode of passion, all devouring and most sinful. Know this to be the enemy here. *The Bhagvadgita*, trans. S. Radhakrishnan. Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1971, p. 148.)
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 92
6. Bacon, "Of Simulation and Dissimulation", *Bacon's Essays*, ed. West, p. 15.
7. *Brahma-Sutra Bhashya of Sankaracarya*, trans. Swami Gambhiranand, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), p. 47.
8. One such philosophy is Buddhism. In the preachings of Gautama Buddha evil appears in the form of Mara as the following extract evidences:
   "The three daughters of Mara tempted the Bodhisatta, but he paid no attention to them, and when Mara saw that he could kindle no desire in the heart of the victorious sumana, he ordered all the evil spirits at his command to attack him and overawe the great muni". *The Gospel of Buddha*, compiled by Paul Carus, Chicago and London: The Open Court, 1917, pp. 36-37.
9. *The Bhagvadgita*, trans. Radhakrishnan, p. 202.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

16

Anurag Mathur's Scrutiny of the Inscrutables

In Anurag Mathur's novel, *The Inscrutable Americans* (1991), we have vivid details of the Americans' temperament and ways and the kind of life they lead. Of particular interest are their ingenuity in devising machines and instruments, their love of orderliness, their approach in the academic field, their emotional behaviour, their attitudes towards foreigners, and the relations prevailing between various ethnic communities.

Notwithstanding his humorous quips and sly irony, Anurag Mathur describes the Americans as ingenious people who have created various kinds of machines and, consequently, have freed themselves from much drudgery. The American's ingenuity has been highlighted more than once. When Randy takes Gopal, the protagonist, to view a movie at the drive-in, he (Randy) "pick [s] up a speaker hanging from the pole and [sticks] it into the window [with the result that] the sound of a chainsaw slicing into bone spray[s] into the car like blood"[1] (141). Gopal is thrilled to see the functioning of American machines: "One machine even consumed dollar bills with a greedy hum and sucked at your fingers as if it was a Venus fly trap wanting more,

before digesting your money with a rumble. This was followed by creaks and rattles as it disgorged your food and ended with a silvery tinkle as it returned your change" (108). Likewise, once Gopal finds a chair which, when kicked, begins "to undulate under him like the Loch Ness Monster" (109). The narrator talks about some other highly sophisticated gadgets "into which you dropped coins and which disgorged food". It seemed incredible to Gopal that machines could be so highly trained that they would not only provide you with different kinds of chocolates and sandwiches, but also give you back the change (108).

Such machines remind one of Walt Whitman's boast in "Passage to India" when he is proud of "the strong light works of engineers, [our] modern wonders (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,...)."[2] William H. Seward, writing in 1854, also referred to the ingenuity of the American mind when he said:

> In Europe, these devices are chiefly such as regard aesthetic effect. In America, on the other hand, those devices are such as have for their object the increase of power. . .[The American] wanted machines for working up his forests, and he invented the saw-gang, and the grooving and planning machines, for cleaning his cotton, and he invented the gin, for harvesting his wheat, and he invented the reaper.[3]

Anurag Mathur, in his novel, makes Gopal note:

> There were numerous glittering dials and the car seemed to move nearly intuitively at Sushant's touch, somewhat removed from the manful grappling that Indian cars demanded before reluctantly yielding. . . . No rattles erupted in the engine, no blasts of outside air made their vicious and victorious way through minute gaps, no opposing headlights malignantly blinded him, and most of all no horns assailed him at every turn (13).

It is suggested that vehicles, roads and road-light in America are maintained more efficiently than their Indian counterparts. The engineers and mechanics of America are presented as both efficient and dutiful.

If one's energies are exhausted only in providing oneself with food, clothing and housing, one's creative capacities lie dormant. But if it is easy to get food, clothing, housing, and transport one can spare oneself for valuable work and participate in social and political activities. Since in America basic amenities are cheap, one living there cannot only participate in social and political activities but can also make creative use of one's potential and talents. And such a state of affairs is likely to result in improving the quality of a man's talents and the quality of living conditions. In other words, it is likely to make people more prosperous. And this is so in Mathur's America, as the prosperity of the Americans has been signified by the novelist through the suggestion that almost every grown up American owns a car: "They drove into the largest parking lot Gopal had seen in his life. Nor, he thought, looking around, had he ever seen such a vast collection of different cars. For one wild moment he wondered if they were fakes put there to impress him. There was every conceivable shape and colour and size..." (46). Randy tells Gopal that he is not an American until he owns a car (47).

Another feature characteristic of Mathur's Americans is their love of orderliness. The orderliness of the mall stuns Gopal, who in the Indian bazaars had seen "a constant roar, like a torrent tearing out of a gorge" (48). But in the mall he finds nothing of the kind. The narrator reports:

> [Gopal] saw that it was a huge double-storeyed building with soft music piped everywhere, discreet lighting throwing an actually welcoming glow, rows of shops, some simply decorated, some bizarre, others with exquisite window-dressing. There was a hush all around except for the house-broken water and discreet music (47-48).

The description testifies to the Americans' love of tidiness. Besides engineers and their assistants, the policemen, too, love orderliness and are dutiful. When Gopal is assaulted, "a police car arrived with its maddening lights" (100), even though nobody has called the police with the result that Gopal and Randy are provided help and protection.

In their academic pursuits, Mathur's Americans love to analyse things and facts. Gopal, while studying Chemical

Engineering there, begins "to learn the joys of analysis rather than retention" (146). Since the teachers in this America try to train their students in analysing things and the students are not kept confined to retaining what comes to them as second hand knowledge, they seem to be trying to make their students independent and make them move on the track leading to making discoveries and giving to the world novel information, and make their academies places where novel and original ideas can generate,[4] because a person trained in analysing things tends to analyse anything that he has at his disposal and is likely to remain independent in his inferences. Another observation made about the American academic activity is that the American teachers encourage students' questioning, as the narrator reports: "Here, he exulted, they loved questions. They didn't care if they were insane, in fact the crazier the better, so long as they were also intelligent" (147). A person given to analysing facts objectively challenges opinions based on prejudices, hearsays, or preconceived notions, and is not likely to take them for granted.

Moreover, *The Inscrutable Americans* presents American academic institutions with a work environment. Gopal finds in America "a friendly, supportive, well-equipped, encouraging work environment" (148), while in India, for him, the relations of colleagues are characterized by "fierce, eternal, all-encompassing hatred" (148).

Gopal's perception about India may be only partially correct, but the kind of life the Americans are described to be leading indicates that the people responsible to provide services do their work efficiently and it must be the result of their efficient efforts that Gopal finds both academic and living conditions in America much better than they are in India, He notes:

> And yet here there was tranquillity, efficiency, a certain new world courtesy and civility all their own. There were amazing facilities to study unimaginable in India. The business of living was made easy, so you could get on with doing more than surviving.... Food, drink, transport, communication, housing, clothing, the essentials were cheap and easy (125).

Gopal gets convinced that survival is not a problem in America

and so, if one likes, one can devote most of one's energies to one's academic pursuits.

The Americans, as portrayed by Mathur, do not exercise much restraint over their emotions. The fact comes to light when we examine their behaviour at the time of annoyance. For instance, when Randy's car causes some inconvenience to the driver of a car trying to overtake it, the driver begins to yell; he "could be seen yelling his mouth opening and closing rapidly" (30), and Randy in return calls him a dog as he says: " Yeah,. . . and I hope the next time you meet your mother she barks at you" (30). The same fact comes to light when we examine Gloria's coming to Gopal, as reported in the following passage: "Her voice cracked and he could almost see the tears streaming down like rivulets. 'I don't want nothing from no one', the jagged whisper continued, 'just a friend to listen to me. I ain't got no one. No one at all. Please. Please just listen to me' " (63). However, the Americans' emotions do not last long, and it is this factor that makes them inconstant in their behaviour. The fact becomes apparent when we examine their amorous behaviour. For instance, Randy is candid enough to confess: "... you can't stay in love with the same girl for longer than a week. Ain't natural" (237). It is the transient quality of emotions that is responsible for estrangements in marital relations and consequent divorces.[5] At least two cases of divorce have been reported in the novel: both Sue and Gloria are divorcees. Sue tells Gopal: "I was married and now I'm not. He doesn't pay alimony..." (151), and Gopal feels "sorry for Sue's obvious poverty" (151). And Gloria is a "divorcee with three divorces" (p. 54).

Another characteristic feature of the Americans, according to Anurag Mathur is their open-armed friendliness. The fact comes to light when we notice Randy's friendship with Gopal and his taking him to his father's house. Gopal finds Randy's mother to be just like his own. As the narrator reports, "Gopal wondered if his mother's soul had somehow transmigrated across the globe and though visa-less, evaded the vigilance of the Immigration Service and settled within Mrs. Wolff" (135-36). Randy's relations with Gopal are absolutely informal and this American friend of his uses such informal language in his conversation as: "Oh boy, you think this is TV! Oh God, is this weird. Gopal, I'm going to make my million today. I'm going

to cut you into little pieces and sell you in cans as the funiest thing alive"(65). Likewise, the Dean of the College is friendly enough to invite Gopal to a New Year's Eve dinner arranged for "friends" (211). This shows that the Americans are different from the people who keep their upper lips stiff and do not 'stoop' to friendly terms.

However, not all American Whites are as friendly as the Dean, Randy and his parents and the like, and there are American Whites who are colour-conscious to the extent that they consider brown-skinned and dark-skinned persons to be less acceptable than the white-skinned ones. The narrator reports: "Gopal had never really thought of himself as being any particular colour while in India. Here it defined nearly every moment of his life. Nor was he used to receiving so much attention and he certainly didn't enjoy it, particularly because it arose from curiosity rather than approval.... Often when he walked into a room he felt that his skin had burst into flames" (89). However, we cannot ignore the fact that even in India the comparatively fair-complexioned people are considered superior to and more acceptable than their less fair countrymen. May be it has its roots in man's preference for light over darkness!

Mathur's Blacks seem to believe that they are poverty-stricken because they are black-complexioned. It is this belief that lies embodied in the Peacock's statement about the Black's poverty, made in the presence of Gopal: "They is born poor, they stays poor and they dies poor" (180). The conditions prevailing in the part of the town inhabited by the Negroes have been described in the following words: "... they entered what seemed a ghost town. Buildings so weary that they seemed upright only with a heroic effort. A tattered curtain fluttered out of a window like the flag of an impoverished nation. The automobiles, those expressions of an America's self image, were rusted, battered, tired. The lawns were unattended. Windows stared brokenly" (179). Peacock wants to prove that the Establishment of the country is not doing for the Negroes what it should and that they are not provided with well-paid jobs or with opportunities to become prosperous. Maybe it is the presence of very efficient machines that has caused the problem of unemployment for the Black's as machines do cause unemployment to the unskilled labour and the fact has been highlighted, for instance, by William

to cut you into little pieces and sell you in cans as the funiest thing alive"(65). Likewise, the Dean of the College is friendly enough to invite Gopal to a New Year's Eve dinner arranged for "friends" (211). This shows that the Americans are different from the people who keep their upper lips stiff and do not 'stoop' to friendly terms.

However, not all American Whites are as friendly as the Dean, Randy and his parents and the like, and there are American Whites who are colour-conscious to the extent that they consider brown-skinned and dark-skinned persons to be less acceptable than the white-skinned ones. The narrator reports: "Gopal had never really thought of himself as being any particular colour while in India. Here it defined nearly every moment of his life. Nor was he used to receiving so much attention and he certainly didn't enjoy it, particularly because it arose from curiosity rather than approval.... Often when he walked into a room he felt that his skin had burst into flames" (89). However, we cannot ignore the fact that even in India the comparatively fair-complexioned people are considered superior to and more acceptable than their less fair countrymen. May be it has its roots in man's preference for light over darkness!

Mathur's Blacks seem to believe that they are poverty-stricken because they are black-complexioned. It is this belief that lies embodied in the Peacock's statement about the Black's poverty, made in the presence of Gopal: "They is born poor, they stays poor and they dies poor" (180). The conditions prevailing in the part of the town inhabited by the Negroes have been described in the following words: "... they entered what seemed a ghost town. Buildings so weary that they seemed upright only with a heroic effort. A tattered curtain fluttered out of a window like the flag of an impoverished nation. The automobiles, those expressions of an America's self image, were rusted, battered, tired. The lawns were unattended. Windows stared brokenly" (179). Peacock wants to prove that the Establishment of the country is not doing for the Negroes what it should and that they are not provided with well-paid jobs or with opportunities to become prosperous. Maybe it is the presence of very efficient machines that has caused the problem of unemployment for the Black's as machines do cause unemployment to the unskilled labour and the fact has been highlighted, for instance, by William

Cobbett in his book *Rural Rides in the Making of English Reading Audiences.*

> I once saw about three thousand farmers, or rather country people, at a horse race in Long Island, and my opinion was that there were not five hundred who were not dressed in home-spun coats. As to linen, no farmer's family thinks of buying linen. The Lords of the Loom have taken from the land, in England, this part of its due, and hence one cause of poverty, misery and pauperism, that are becoming so frightful throughout the country....But the land suffers greatly from this, and the country must finally feel the fatal effects of it. The country people lost part of their natural employment. The women and children, who ought to provide a great part of the raiment, have nothing to do.[6]

Some White racist might go to the extent of subscribing to the view embodied in the following words of George Fitzhugh: "...the negro race is inferior to the White race, and living in their midst, they would be far outstripped or outwitted in the chase of free competition. Gradual but certain extermination would be their fate. We presume the maddest abolitionist does not think the Negro's providence of habits and money-making capacity at all to compare to those of the Whites."[7]

But the experience of South Africa where the Negroes removed the White government from the throne and captured state power, has falsified such claims. So the reasons of the Negroes' poverty have to be traced in the social conditions prevailing in the U.S.A.

This colour-consciousness has taken an aggressive form in the White racists, who do not like foreigners, especially Iranians, to enter America and who try to terrorize foreigners out of their country. The fact comes to light when we study the behaviour, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, of the members of the gang that assaults Gopal. These are the words of one of its members: "I jest don't like it, boy, Why don't you get back to your camel land while you can?" (98). Likewise, the waiter Tom says to Gopal " We're going to keep America just the easy it's always been and that's the only way to keep it great. My grand-daddy died fighting for it, my dad was wounded in the war, my brother

served in Korea and I did my duty in Nam. We've paid our dues and we done all we could for this country, but we didn't do it to turn America into no nigger heaven, . . ." (175). Thus, as Anurag Mathur suggests, America also has fanatics who carry campaigns against foreigners—especially coloured people.[8] Such people seems to be the followers of Josian Strong, the 19th century congregational minister, who regarded America as the country meant for the Anglo-Saxons to thrive in, as is evident from what he wrote in 1885.

> There can be no reasonable doubt that North America is to be the great home of the Anglo-Saxon, the principal seat of his power, the centre of his life and influence. Not only does it constitute seven-elevenths of his possessions, but his empire is unsevered, while the remaining four-elevenths are fragmentary and scattered over the earth.[8]

The aggressive whites in Mathur's America feel that they are facing a threat from the communists. Tom tells Gopal "There's one Commie under every rock as Joe McCarthy said. And I can tell you, we've got to be real careful" (175). The Americans feel the need of making efforts to contain communism not only abroad but also in their own country.

The American Whites' colour-consciousness finds expression even in their choice of the colours of electric lights as they are reported to like to have golden light in the buildings where they have persons intimate with them, and white light in the buildings where persons not intimate with them also can come. As Gopal comes to know, "Golden light meant homes, bars, intimacy. Tube lights, or any form of white light, was for classrooms, hospitals, large stores, anything public and impersonal" (90).

Anurag Mathur has revealed another black spot on the face of the American society. Some women earn their livelihood by letting their bodies be used by men to gratify their carnal desires or by dancing undressed. A black man "dressed in a breathtakingly beautiful grey overcoat" (21) approaches Gopal with the offer: "Well, my man, my main man, what I got is some live pussy for you. How about that now? Isn't that you'd like some real live, wild pussy just for you? Let's go, get some of that

man" (22). And when Gopal went to see dances, one of the women dancers "moved with an eroticism that made him suddenly realise what dancing was meant to emulate" (93) and the other came to him "like a missile homing into a radar beam" (94). Perhaps it is poverty that drives these women to take to such professions. A self-respectful community will see to it that none of its members has to undergo the humiliation of earning one's bread by such means. Even a respectful person will ordinarily not like to earn one's livelihood by doing something humiliating. The American women who have taken to such professions might have been the victims of the phenomenon of unemployment.

Anurag Mathur's presentation of some important aspects of the American life and society, through Gopal, is interesting. The America of his perception is a novelist's world which bears credible resemblances with a real brave new world. Since it is the creation of a novelist, and not that of a social chronicler or historian, not all the traits of the Americans mind and behaviour have been placed before us. The picture of the American world that emerges is nevertheless not without interest howsoever sketchy and fleeting it may seem to be.

Notes and References

1. Anurag Mathur, *The Inscrutable Americans* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1991). All quotations incorporated in the text refer to this edition of the book.
2. Walt Whitman, "Passage to India", *Leaves of Grass*, (New Delhi: Eurasia, 1970), p. 321.
3. W.H. Seward, "The Physical, Moral and Intellectural Development of the American People," In *A Nineteenth-century American Reader*, ed. M. Thomas Inge, (Washington: United States Information Agency, 1989), p. 110.
4. The Americans have harboured the ambition to be independent in the intellectual field for centuries. John L. O'Sullivan wrote in 1839: "And our literature? Oh, when will it breathe the spirit of our republican institution? When will it be imbued with the Godlike aspiration of intellectual freedom—the elevating principle of equality? When will it assert *its* national independence and speak the soul, the heart of the American people?" "The Great Nation of Futurity", in *A Nineteenth-century American Reader*, ed. Inge, p. 7.

5. In Vikram Seth's, *The Golden Gate*, Claire leaves her husband Philip and their son Paul with the result that all the three have to face suffering.
6. Quoted in Don H. Bialostovsky, "Social Action and 'The Solitary Reaper': Wordsworth at Yale", *Indian Journal of American Studies*, 23/1, Winter 1993, p. 54.
7. George Fitzhugh, "Sociology for the South: Negro Slavery", in *A Nineteenth-century American Reader*, ed. Inge, p. 310.
8. Josiah Strong, "Our Country: Its Positive Future and Its Present Crisis", in *A Nineteenth-century American Reader*, p. 22.

17

Communism in the Eyes of Arundhati Roy

Even though Abu Abraham asserts: "Arundhati whom I have known for some years is not a political person. She may have just thought of having a little fun at the Kerala communists' expense. And anyway her aspersions, such as they are, are only peripheral to the main story",[1] one cannot help regarding her novel *The God of Small Things* as an embodiment of Arundhati Roy's views about the politico-economic philosophy of communism because in this novel a lot has been said about communists and communism.

The characters described as communists in this novel range here from a former Chief Minister of Kerala Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad to a common party worker Velutha. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, who is the only historical character in the novel was the Chief Minister of Kerala twice, first from 1957 to 1959 A.D. and secondly in the late 'Sixties from 1967 to 1969. The narrator in *The God of Small Things* reports that E.M.S. Namboodiripad's ancestral home has been made a part of the hotel 'Heritage' and is being used as the hotel's dining room, and old communists "worked as fawning bearers in colourful

ethnic clothes"[2] in it.[3] Since E.M.S. Namboodiripad is described by the "Hotel People" as "Kerala's Mao Tse-Tung" (*GST.*, p. 126) it is evident that he is a communist and since he has been described as the Chief Minister of Kerala in the years in which the historical E.M.S. Namboodiripad was the Chief Minister of Kerala one has to come to the conclusion that the novel's E.M.S. Namboodiripad is a historical character irrespective of what the novelist says about him. Even though the author claims: "The characters are all fictional" (*GST.*, the back of the inner title page.), the narrator talks of the performance of the government of E.M.S. Namboodiripad on his becoming Chief Minister of Kerala in 1957, and describes the position of the communist rulers of Kerala as "extraordinary", if not "absurd", when she reports:

> Suddenly the communists found themselves in the extraordinary—critics say absurd—position of having to govern a people and foment revolution simultaneously. Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad evolved his own theory about how he would do this. Chacko studied his treatise on *The Peaceful Transition to Communism* with an adolescent's obsessive diligence and an ardent fan's unquestioning approval. It set out in detail how Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad's government intended to enforce land reforms, neutralize the police, subvert the judiciary and 'Restrain the Hand of the Reactionary Anti-People Congress Government at the Centre'.

Unfortunately, before the year was out, the Peaceful part of the Peaceful Transition came to an end. (*GST.*, p. 67).

The novelist is drawing attention to the fact that there was something wanting in E.M.S. Namboodiripad's postulates, as even though he aimed at a peaceful transition to communism, the transition did not remain peaceful even for one year and soon there were "riots, strikes and incidents of police brutality" (*GST.*, p. 67). The implication is that Namboodiripad's views about the situation prevailing in Kerala in 1957 were based on a faulty understanding of that situation and that instead of neutralizing the police he had started using them as his tools to achieve his goals. This also implies that E.M.S. Namboodiripad

had realized within a year that at least in the situation prevailing in Kerala in 1957 it was essential for a communist ruler to use the police to achieve his goals and that when he had prepared the treatise *The Peaceful Transition to Communism* he had not been aware of that fact. That signifies Arundhati Roy's suggesting that E.M.S. Namboodiripad's political views were based on an unsound understanding of life and, so, they deserved rejection.

Another weakness of the communist rulers of Kerala mentioned in the passage quoted above is that though they stood for fomenting a revolution, which means asking people to take law in their own hands and defy the government authorities, they were also rulers and had, by implication, taken upon themselves the responsibility of protecting people from those who took law in their own hands. The implication is that these rulers either did not want to foment a revolution or did not want to govern and did not want to prevent people from taking law in their own hands. In either case, the implication is, they were not telling people the truth about their intentions.

The other communist characters in the novel are not free from weaknesses even if they are the weaknesses of different sorts. One of these characters is Chacko. This man, as the narrator reports has a Marxist mind, no doubt, but he is also a man with "feudal libido" (*GST.*, p. 168) as he has " his libertine relationships with the women in the factory" (*GST.*, p. 168). If a man with a Marxist mind too regards women as things made to gratify his hedonistic desires, he is as bad as any feudal lord and, the implication is, deserves to be guillotined like the French feudal lords of the eighteenth century. Marx rejects the bourgeois social system also on the ground that in it people are loose-moralled and have illicit relations with the persons of fair sex from both the lower section of society and their own section of society.[4] In Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* this communist factory owner is equally lecherous.

The narrator in the novel charges the Communists of Kerala with having been casteists in their approaches as she reports: "The real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden extremely traditional community. The Marxists worked from *within* the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not

to. They offered a cocktail revolution. A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy" (*GST.*, pp. 66-67). The fact has been evinced in the behaviours of characters too. For instance, K.N.M. Pillai, who is a communist press-owner has been reported to be a casteist as he does not like Velutha to be there in the Party, for Velutha is an 'untouchable', a low-caste Hindu. The narrator reports the fact in the following words:

> The only snag in Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's plans was Velutha. Of all the workers at Paradise Pickles, he was the only card-holding member of the Party, and that gave Comrade Pillai an ally he would rather have done without. He knew that all the other touchable workers in the factory resented Velutha for ancient reasons of their own. Comrade Pillai steeped carefully around the wrinkle, waiting for a suitable opportunity to iron it out.
>
> (*GST.*, p. 121)

Since Pillai still regards a worker as an 'untouchable' and likes him to be eased out of the Party only because the latter belongs to a caste believed to be low, he is not a communist in the real sense of the word as a communist stands for the equality of all and likes the state power to come into the hands of workers irrespective of their castes, colours, and creeds, as Marx, through his *Communist Manifesto*, asked all the workers of the world to unite.[5]

Moreover, if these communists are not bold enough to challenge communal divides, it is impossible for them to be impartial as governors, though the first qualification of a governor is that he is absolutely just and impartial as a ruler[6] and, unlike Shakespeare's King Lear, administers justice not on the basis of the love people bear him, but on the basis of their rights and the services they render to the state.

When the narrator reports that the communist rulers never challenge communal divides, she adds: "never appearing not to" (see *supra*) she is also charging them with being hypocrites, who preach one thing and practice another and are different from Chaucer's Parson who is so good that "first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte".[7]

Another weakness that the narrator finds in K.N.M. Pillai is that even though as a communist he wants the workers of the factory Paradise Pickles to organize themselves into a union and "urge(s) them on to revolution" (*GST.*, p. 120) yet he tries to protect his own business interests with Chacko, the owner of the Paradise Pickles. The fact has been mentioned sarcastically by the narrator in the following words:

> Comrade K.N.M. Pillai never came out openly against Chacko. Whenever he referred to him in his speeches he was careful to strip him of any human attributes and present him as an abstract functionary in some larger scheme. A theoretical construct. A pawn in the monstrous bourgeois plot to subvert revolution....Apart from it being tactically the right thing to do, this disjunction between the man and his job helped Comrade Pillai to keep his conscience clear about his own private business dealings with Chacko. (*GST.*, p. 121)

The implication is that far from being truthful and straightforward Pillai is a tactful and cunning man who does not forget his own economic interests and keeps them above the cause of communism, and, thus, he is a bourgeois at heart and pays only a lip-service to communism.

When the narrator says: "...Comrade K.N.M. Pillai was essentially a political man. A professional omeletteer. He walked through the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself, never appearing not to. Emerging through chaos unscathed" (*GST.*, p. 14), it becomes crystal clear that Pillai is an opportunist who can stoop to any level to achieve his goal including the use of hypocrisy.

Velutha, the communist worker, comes from the ranks as he belongs to the section of communists who are the muscle-power of the party and takes part in demonstrations "marching with a red flag...with angry veins in his neck" (*GST.*, p. 71). He may be "*The God of Small Things*" as the novelist chooses to describe him in the title of the novel, as he is able to make things like "rosewood dining table" (*GST.*, p. 28), and "intricate toys—tiny windmills, rattle, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds;...perfect boats, out of tapioca stems and figurines on

cashew nuts" (*GST.*, p. 74), " mends radios, clocks [and] pumps" (*GST.*, p. 75) but he is the devil of a big thing " a monster" (*GST.*, p. 78) in his father's eyes as he develops illicit relations with Ammu, his employer's sister and pays no regard to the ethical rule that another man's wife is to be regarded as one's mother and another man's property is to be regarded as a lump of soil,[8] with the result that all efforts " to contain the scandal and salvage the family reputation in Inspector Thomas Mathew's eyes" (*GST.*, p. 259) end in nothing as this Police Inspector starts calling Ammu a *veshya* (a whore) and regards her children as illegitimate (*GST.*, p. 8).

The Naxalites are another group of communists mentioned in the novel. They are reported to be indulging in plundering and committing murder, as the reporter observes: "They organized peasants into fighting cadres, seized land, expelled the owners and established People's Courts to try Class Enemies" (*GST.*, p. 68). The details of a murder committed by the Naxalites of Kerala given by the novelist arouse disgust for the people committing them.

> That May there was a blurred photograph in the papers of a landlord in Palghat who had been tied to a lamp post and beheaded. His head lay on its side, some distance away from his body, in a dark puddle that could have been water, could have been blood. (*GST.*, pp. 68-69).

This is tantamount to saying that during the reign of E.M.S. Namboodiripad the Naxalites were indulging in nothing less than plundering and murdering the rich and the land-owning people and had no regard either for law or ethics. But since these people too were communists and started indulging in such activities during the reign of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, they owned their existence to Namboodiripad's policies and programmes, maybe his programme of "fomenting a revolution" (see *supra*). That implies Arundhati Roy's suggesting that it was E.M.S. Namboodiripad who was responsible for what the Naxalites were doing.

Arundhati Roy goes to the extent of evincing that even Marx's understanding of life was not faultless, as it is based on the assumption that workers "have nothing to lose but their

chains"[9] but the fact remains that the jobs the workers have are a privilege which is not available to a large section of population. India, she depicts in this novel, is a country in which there exist a host of unemployed persons as compared to whom the employed workers are a privileged section of population. And that must be the reason why Mammachi's remark: "Tell them to read the papers. There's a famine on. There are no jobs. People are starving to death. They should be grateful they have any work *at all*" (*GST.*, pp. 121-22) throws cold water on the workers zeal for fighting Chacko for better wages. In other words according to Arundhati Roy the communist programme of action is meant for a state of affairs in which " workers have nothing to lose but their chains" but the conditions prevailing in Arundhati Roy's Kerala are not that bad for the workers. That implies suggesting that a political philosophy based on a faulty analysis of the prevailing situation cannot be free from faults.

Notes and References

1. Abu Abraham, "Breaking the Love Laws", *The Hindustan Times Sunday Magazine*, 23 November, 1997, p. 3.
2. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New Delhi: IndiaInk, 1997) p. 126. All the subsequent references to the novel (*GST* for short) are to this edition.
3. This is not a historical fact, as is evident from the following remark of Abu Abraham: " In fact E.M.S.'s ancestral home is in Mallapuram, 250 kms away in the north....Arundhati overlooked the fact that E.M.S. donated the entire proceeds from the sale of his share of ancestral property to the Communist Party" ("Breaking the Love Laws", *op. cit.*, p. 3). Dr. Malathi Damodaran, the daughter of Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, is reported to have told the *Press Trust of India*: " What makes one suspect that the reference is not merely a figment of the author's imagination is the fact that the hotel described in the novel does exist in Kottayam. The said hotel, till around 1993, was the ancestral home of another gentleman with similar initials—Ezhumavil Subramanian Namboodiripad. My father's full name, on the other hand, is Elamkulam Manakkal Sankaran Namboodiripad" ("Now EMS's Kin Attacks Arundhati's Book", *The Hindustan Times*, November 5, 1997, p. 9).
4. Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto.* (Moscow: Foreign Languages 1953), p. 76.
5. *Ibid.*, p. *104*

6. While discussing the qualifications of a ruler Manu writes:
   brahmam praptena sanskaram kshatriyena yathividhi
   sarvasyasya yathanyayam karttavyam parirakshanam (*Manusmriti* VII, 2). (When a warrior attains as much learning as entitles one to become a brahmin he should protect the kingdom in a just and impartial manner).
7. Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tale's, '1.497.
8. The Hindu ethical view is:
   matrivat paradareshu pardravyeshu loshthavat
   atmavat sarvabhuteshu yah pashyati sah panditeh
   (One who regards another man's wife as his mother and another man's property as a lump of clay and another person as oneself.
9. Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto, op. cit.*, p. 104.

6. While discussing the qualifications of a ruler Manu writes:
   brahmam praptena sanskaram kshatriyena yathividhi
   sarvasyasya yathanyayam karttavyam parirakshanam (*Manusmriti* VII, 2). (When a warrior attains as much learning as entitles one to become a brahmin he should protect the kingdom in a just and impartial manner).
7. Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tale's, '1.497.
8. The Hindu ethical view is:
   matrivat paradareshu pardravyeshu loshthavat
   atmavat sarvabhuteshu yah pashyati sah panditeh
   (One who regards another man's wife as his mother and another man's property as a lump of clay and another person as oneself.
9. Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto, op. cit.*, p. 104.

Index

Action theory, 11-12, 96-98
Aggression
  resistance methods against, 33-36
Alienation, 99-110
America
  academic pursuits in, 146-48
  basic amenities in, 146
  divorce system, 148
  machines in, 144-45
  traffic control system in, 151-52
Americans, 144-52
  emotions and, 148
  friendliness of, 148-49
  life and society, 144-52
American whites
  colour-consciousness, 149-51
Amritsar, 58
Angulimal, 7
Anand, Mulk Raj, 74
Anglo-Saxons, 151
Ansal, Kusum, 74, 78
Anti-Sikh riots, 84
Atharvaveda, 8
Attachment, 90-92
Atwood, Margaret, 62, 64, 66
Awasthi, A.K., 76-77
Azadi (Nahal), 50-61, 82-84

Bend in the Ganges, A (Malgonkar), 82-84
Bhagvadgita, (Krishna), 88, 91-94
Bhattacharya, Bhabani, 32, 41, 82-84
Boer war, 10
Border dispute
  Sino-Indian, 84
Bourgeois social system, 156
Brahman, 141

British Justice, 10
Buddha, Lord, 7, 98
Buddhism
  on evil appearance, 143n

Caste-System, 18-19, 21
Chastity, 7
Child psychology, 63-64
Chinese aggression, 32, 34-36, 84
  peace march against, 35-36
City and the River (Joshi), 82, 85, 112-27
Civilization, 104-10
Christ, Jesus, 33
Churchill, Winston, 13
Civil Disobedience, 34
Come up and Be Dead (Deshpande), 77-78, 135-43
Communal harmony, 83
Communal riots (1947), 50-61, 83-84
Communalism, 151
Communication methods
  political control over, 117-18
Communism, 154-60
  casteists approach to, 156-58
  peaceful transition to, 155-56
Conversation
  concept, 13
  of Hindus, 54-55, 59
Cooperative banks, 26-27
Corruption, 86
Cosmic energy, 133
Cry, the Peacock, (Desai), 62, 65-66, 75-76

Dandi March, 1
Dark Holds No Terrors, The (Deshpande), 76-78
David Copperfield (Charles Dickens), 78
Darwin, 88
Day of Shadow, The (Sahgal), 84
Delhi (Khushwant Singh), 82, 84
Democracy, 85-86, 123
Desai, Anita, 62, 65-66, 74-76
Deshpande, Shashi, 74, 76-77, 135, 138, 141-43
Detachment, 92-96
  principle, 88
Dickens, Charles, 17, 129, 136
Divine Justice, 123
Divorce, 68-73
Dowry system, 27
Dusk Before Dawn (Sheorey), 86

Edible Women, The (Atwood), 62-65
Emergency proclamation, 80, 85-86
Emotions, 148
Enemy
  faith in, 12
English novelists, 75
Esmond In India (Jhabwala), 80
Evil
  Buddhist philosophy of, 143n
  existence of, 141-42
Excommunication, 20

Family rule, 113-14
Farmers
  bank loan system and, 28-29
  position of, 26-27
Father-image, 64
Fear, 139
Feminism, 68-73, 76-78
Financial Expert, The (Narayan), 25-31
Foreigner, The (Joshi), 88-98
Freedom of press, 117-18

Gandhi, Indira, 80
Gandhism, 1-22
Gargary, Mrs. Jol, 17
Gener theory, 63

Gita (Krishan), 142-43
God, 11
  existence of, 128
God of Small Things, The (Roy), 154-60
Great Expectations (Dicken), 136
Great Indian Novel, The (Tharoor), 82, 85
Gyan Yoga, 91

Hamlet (Shakespeare), 78
Hindu-Muslim relations
  pre-partition, 50-51
Hindu-Muslim riots (1947), 52-61, 83-84
Hindus
  atrocities faced by
    in partition riots, 52-60
Hurlock, Elizabeth B., 99, 103

If I Die Today (Deshpande), 77
Illiteracy, 26-27
Illusion, 94-95
Identify (self), 101-10
India-China War (1962), 84
Indian immigrants, 79-80
Industrialization, 36-37, 42-43, 85
Injustice, 33
Inscrutable Americans, The (Mathur), 114-52
Inscrutables, 144-52
Insurgency
  impact of, 6-7

Jhabvala, Ruth Prawar, 74, 78, 80
Jinnah, M.A., 60
Joshi, Arun, 82, 85-86, 97-98, 100, 110, 112, 123, 128, 133

Kanthapura (Raja Rao), 1-14, 16, 19
Karma concept, 11-12, 96-98
Karma Yoga, 92
Karma Cola (Mehta), 79
Kerala
  communism in, 154-56
King
  qualification of, 8
King, Martin Luther, 33-34
Kraus, Fritz, 10
Kripalani, J.B., 60
Krishna, Lord, 11-12, 88, 142

Lasciviousness, 135, 137-38
Last Labyrinth, The (Joshi), 88, 128-34
Louis XIV, *King*, 114
Love, 90-91, 93-94

Machines, 144-45
Malgonkar, Manohar, 82-83
Malpractices
  in politics, 112-20
Markandaya, Kamla, 74, 78-79
Marriage, 93
Marx, Karl, 116, 159-60
Marxism, 96-97, 156-57
Materialism, 41-47
  unethical, 44-45
Mathur, Anurag, 144, 146, 150-52
McCarthy, Joe, 151
McMahon Line, 37, 84
Mehta, Gita, 74, 78-79
Midnight's Children (Rushdie), 82
Ministerial posts, 115
Moha see Attachment
Money-lending, 25
Money-machine culture, 105
Morality, 44-45, 129
  sex discrimination, 75
Marriage
  institution of, 62-66
Mothers, 16-23
  without marriage, 62-65
Mother-image, 63-64
Mukherji, Bharati, 74, 78-79

Nahal, Chaman, 50, 82-83
Namboodiripad, E.M.S., 154-56, 159
Narayan, R.K., 25, 74
Nation, 114
'Natural selection' principle, 63
Naxalites, 159
Negroes, 149-50
Nehru Jawaharlal, 22, 50, 60, 80, 84
Non-violence, 1-3, 7-10, 12, 21, 84
Nowhere Man, The (Markandaya), 79

Outsider, The, 100

Pains, 90-91
Pakistan
  creation of
    Hindus creation in, 57-61
Partition of India
  communal riots and, 50-61
Passive resistance, 14n, 32, 34, 38-39
Peace and stability, 124
Peace march, 35-36
People's demands, 116-17
(*The*) *Plague*, 100
Political activities, 29, 80, 85
Political corruption, 126
Political elimination, 115, 117
Political malpractices, 112-20
Political opponents
  methods to discourage, 117-19
Political power
  misuse of
    punishment for, 122
  wielding of
    malpractices used for, 112-20
Political resistance, 120-22
Political surrender, 120-21
Population freezing, 119
Poverty and hunger, 41, 43-44, 115-16
Praying to God, 133
Price manipulation, 116
Proneness, 135, 138-41
Public funds
  misuse of, 115
Punjab
  communal harmony in
    during pre-partition days, 49-52
  Hindu Muslim riots in, 52-61
Publishing business, 29-30

Racial discrimination, 149-51
Raja Rao, 74
Rallies and demonstrations, 112-13
Rao, Raja, 1, 16
Rape, 68-69
Refugees, 56-57
Revengefulness, 135-36
Rich Like Us (Sahgal), 80, 86
Righteousness, 12
Rolland, Romain, 10
Roy, Arundhati, 74, 154, 156
Roy, Bhashkar, 85
Rumination, 93
Rural poverty, 26-27
Rushdie, Salman, 82

Sahgal, Nayantara, 68, 72-75, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86
Sarangi, Prakash, 10
Satyagraha, 9-10, 14n
  definition of, 15n
Security threats, 118
Self-assessment, 77
Self-reliance, 3
Self-sufficiency, 44, 46
Serpent and the Rope, The (Raja Rao), 16-24
Sex
  equality of, 75

Freud's theory of, 63-64
Shadow from Ladakh (Bhattacharaya), 32-39, 41-47, 82, 84
Shakti worshipping, 133
Sheorey, Anant Gopal, 86
Shivani, 22
Sikhs, 51, 55
Singh, Khushwant, 82-84
Situation in New Delhi, A (Sahgal), 68-71, 80, 87
Social practices, 78
Socialism, 13-14
Spiritual powers, 132-34
Spiritualism
materialism and, 41-47
Step-mothers, 23
Storm in Chandigarh (Sahgal), 69, 71, 75, 80, 82, 86
Strange Case of Billy Biswas, The (Joshi), 99-110
Suicide
by women, 68-73
Supernatural being, 132

Tennyson, 64
Tharoor, Shashi, 82, 85
Thoreau, Henry David, 33
The Time of Morning (Sahgal), 80, 86
Tolerance, 52
Train to Pakisthan (Khushwant Singh), 82-84
Travelling with a Sunbeam (Ansal), 78
Tribal Civilization, 107-10
Truth, 9, 21

U.S.A. *see* America
Universe, 128, 141
Upanishads, 141
Urdu language, 50

Valmiki, Saint, 39
Vindictive person, 136
Violence, 4, 10, 19, 34, 45, 51
Virginity, 69, 75
Voices in the City (Desai), 62, 65-66, 75-76

War, 34
Western countries
Indian migrants in, 79-80
Where Shall We Go This Summer? (Desai), 62, 65-66, 75-76
Widow remarriage, 78
Wife (Mukherjee), 79
Wife's adjustment issue, 68-73, 75-76
Women
of China, 34-35
Womenfolk
dishonouring of
during partition, 54, 56, 59
suicide committing and, 68
see also, Feminism
Women's liberation movement, 62-67, 72-73
Women novelists, 74-80
Women strugglers
in freedom movement, 12-13
Worship places
defilation of, 53
Wrong-doing *see* Evil

Zulu revolt, 10